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EXCHANGE
JUL 15 1920

Volume XXIII

Number 1

A. J. Armstrong, Editor

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Homage to
Robert Browning



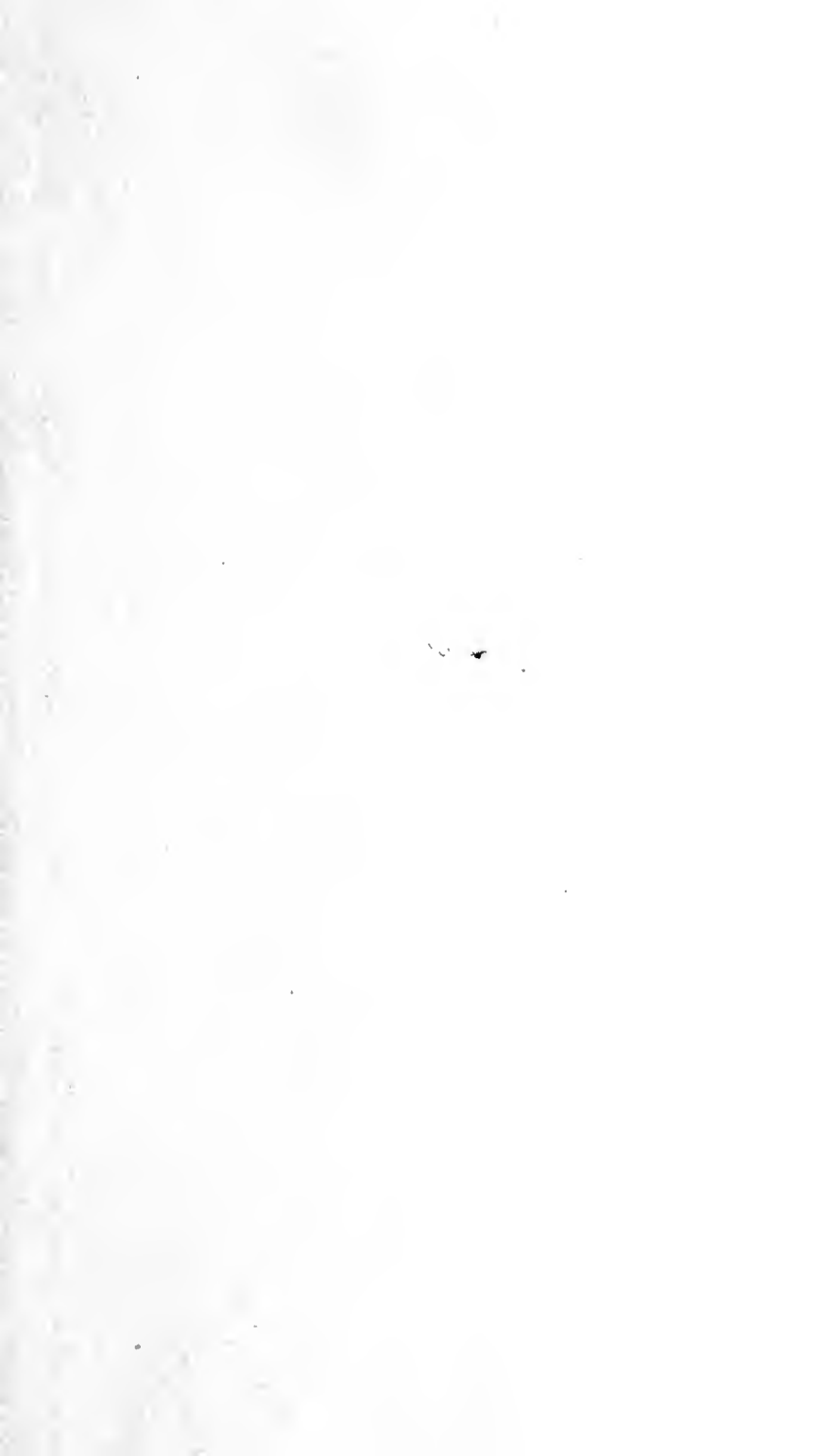
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BAYLOR UNIVERSITY
WACO, TEXAS

The Baylor Bulletin
JANUARY, 1920

EXCHANGE





*Homage to
Robert Browning*

By ALEPH TANNER

THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

PRINTED BY THE
BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS

EXCHANGE

TO WHOM
ADDRESS

INTRODUCTION

This book has resulted from a course in the study of the poetry of Robert Browning which I took while attending Baylor University. My knowledge of the poet and his work was extremely limited—and I fear prejudiced—but the more I studied, the greater was my enthusiasm and admiration. This led me to undertake for my senior thesis (A. B.) the gathering of tributes to Robert Browning, and the task has afforded me much pleasure—despite the immense amount of work necessary to collect these poems and secure the privilege to print them.

Some poems contained in the volume have never before been published: they were written and read at special Browning functions, and it has been due to the generous co-operation of Browning lovers everywhere that I have been able to locate these lines. Even now I have secured information concerning other poems which I fear will not reach me in time to include in this book. I feel certain that there will be another volume issued as a supplement to this one, so that I now appeal to all readers to send to me or to Dr. A. J. Armstrong, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, any other poems or information concerning other poems which I have not included. At first it was purposed to include parodies, but the collection grew to such proportions—and the parodies have a unity in themselves—that it was decided to use only the serious poems and to issue later a collection known as *Parodies of Robert Browning's Poems*. Any one knowing of parodies will confer a great favor by reporting such poems.

Since the admirers of Browning live in every clime and follow every walk in life, one will not be surprised to find here a variety of verses, and as a natural result the contrast in poems is at times marked, yet all have sought to render "Homage to Robert Browning"—so that in our arrangement "there is no first or last."

Browning! That name has served as a password which has opened to me many a treasured friendship, for all

Browning lovers seem to have caught the Poet's optimistic message and, like Pippa, can always sing,

*"God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world!"*

That you, dear reader, may derive pleasure from these pages is my earnest hope, for it has been a work of love.

My indebtednesses have been so numerous that I have hardly known where to begin to acknowledge them. Miss Marie Ada Molineux, of the Boston Browning Society; Miss Florence Weir Gibson, of the New York Browning Society; Mr. Frank H. Chase, of the Boston Public Library; Dr. S. G. Ayer, of Garret Biblical Institute, Evanston; the librarians of Baylor University, of New York City, of Congress and of the British Museum, have generously co-operated. The authors and publishers of the poems collected have without exception given me permission to reprint their works. But most of all, I would thank my teacher and friend, Dr. A. J. Armstrong, whose devotion to Browning has through a long period of years induced many students to sit at the feet of this master poet and has sent them on their way with an abiding love for poetry and with higher ideals of life.

ALEPH TANNER.

Gonzales, Texas, May 7, 1920.

Homage to Robert Browning

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SONNETS
FROM THE PORTUGUESE

BY ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

I

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair,
And a voice said in mastery while I strove,
'Guess now who holds thee?'—'Death,' I said.

But, there,
The silver answer rang . . . 'Not Death, but Love.'

II.

BUT only three in all God's universe
Have heard this word thou hast said,—Himself, beside
Thee speaking, and me listening! and replied
One of us . . . *that* was God, . . and laid the curse
So darkly on my eyelids, as to amerce
My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,
The deathweights, placed there, would have signified
Less absolute exclusion. 'Nay' is worse
From God than from all others, O my friend!
Men could not part us with their worldly jars,
Nor the seas change us, nor the tempest bend;
Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars,—
And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
We should but vow the faster for the stars.

HOMAGE TO

III.

UNLIKE are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to play thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer, . . singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress-tree?
The chrism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV

THOU hast thy calling to some palace-floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems! where
The dancers will break footing, from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush, call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps . . as thou must sing . . alone, aloof.

V.

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
Through the ashen greyness. If thy foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if instead
Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
The grey dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,
O my Belovèd, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
The hair beneath. Stand further off then! go.

VI.

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forbore, . .
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes, the tears of two.

VII.

THE face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
And this . . this lute and song . . loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only dear,
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII.

WHAT can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, who hast brought the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,
And laid them on the outside of the wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so; not cold,—but very poor instead.
Ask God who knows. For frequent tears have run
The colours from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

IX

CAN it be right to give what I can give?
 To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
 As salt as mine and hear the sighing years
 Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
 Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
 For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
 That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
 So to be lovers; and I own, and grieve,
 That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
 Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
 I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
 Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
 Nor give thee any love . . . which were unjust.
 Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X

YET, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
 And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,
 Let temple burn, or flax. An equal light
 Leaps in the flame from cedar plank or weed,
 And love is fire; and when I say at need
I love thee . . mark! . . I love thee! . . in thy sight
 I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
 With conscience of the new rays that proceed
 Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
 In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
 Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
 And what I *feel* across the inferior features
 Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
 How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI.

AND therefore if to love can be desert,
 I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
 As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
 To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—
 This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
 To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
 To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale
 A melancholy music,—why advert
 To these things? O Belovèd, it is plain
 I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!
 And yet, because I love thee, I obtain
 From that same love this vindicating grace,
 To live on still in love, and yet in vain, . .
 To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

XII.

INDEED this very love which is my boast,
And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
To draw men's eyes and prove the inner cost, . .
This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
I should not love withal, unless that thou
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed
And love called love. And thus, I cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my own.
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
And that I love (O soul, we must be meek!)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII.

AND wilt thou have me fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
Between our faces, to cast light on each?—
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself . . me. . . that I should bring thee proof
In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV.

IF thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
I love her for her smile . . her look . . her way
Of speaking gently, . . for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'—
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so
wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

XV.

ACCUSE me not, beseech thee, that I wear
Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;
For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.
On me thou lookest, with no doubting care,
As on a bee shut in a crystalline,—
Since sorrow has shut me safe in love's divine,
And to spread wing and fly in the outer air
Were most impossible failure, if I strove
To fail so. But I look on thee . . on thee . .
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
Hearing oblivion beyond memory!
As one who sits and gazes from above,
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI.

AND yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
Too close against thine heart, henceforth to know
How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward, as in crushing low!
And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,—
Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XVII.

MY poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
God set between His After and Before,
And strike up and strike off the general roar
Of the rushing worlds, a melody that floats
In a serene air purely. Antidotes
Of medicated music, answering for
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine.
How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
A hope, to sing by gladly? . . or a fine
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?
A shade, in which to sing . . . of palm or pine?
A grave, on which to rest from singing? . . Choose.

XVIII.

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
 To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
 Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully
 I ring out to the full brown length and say
 'Take it.' My day of youth went yesterday;
 My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee.
 Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
 As girls do, any more. It only may
 Now shade on two pale cheeks, the mark of tears,
 Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
 Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
 Would take this first, but Love is justified,—
 Take it thou, . . finding pure, from all those years,
 The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;
 I barter curl for curl upon that mart,
 And from my poet's forehead to my heart,
 Receive this lock which outweighs argosies,—
 As purple black, as erst, to Pindar's eyes,
 The dim purpureal tresses gloomed athwart
 The nine white Muse-brows. For this counterpart,
 Thy bay-crown's shade, Belovèd, I surmise,
 Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!
 Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,
 I tie the shadow safe from gliding back,
 And lay the gift where nothing hindereth,
 Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to lack
 No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

XX

BELOVED, my Belovèd, when I think
 That thou wast in the world a year ago,
 What time I sate alone here in the snow
 And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
 No moment at thy voice, . . but, link by link,
 Went counting all my chains, as if that so
 They never could fall off at any blow
 Struck by thy possible hand . . . why, thus I drink
 Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,
 Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
 With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
 Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
 Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
 Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXI

SAY over again, and yet once over again,
 That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
 Should seem 'a cuckoo-song,' as thou dost treat it,
 Remember never to the hill or plain,
 Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain,
 Comes the fresh spring in all her green completed.
 Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted
 By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
 Cry . . 'Speak once more . . thou lovest!' Who can
 fear

Too many stars. though each in heaven shall roll—
 Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year!
 Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
 The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
 To love me also in silence, with thy soul.

XXII

WHEN our two souls stand up erect and strong,
 Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
 Until the lengthening wings break into fire
 At either curvèd point,—what bitter wrong,
 Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
 Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,—
 The angels would press on us, and aspire
 To drop some golden orb of perfect song
 Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
 Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit
 Contrarious moods of men recoil away
 And isolate pure spirits, and permit
 A place to stand and love in for a day,
 With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXIII

Is *it* indeed so? If I lay here dead,
 Would'st thou miss any life in losing mine?
 And would the sun for thee more coldly shine,
 Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
 I marvelled, my Belovèd, when I read
 Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
 But . . *so* much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
 While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
 Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range.
 Then, love me, Love! look on me . . breathe on me
 As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
 For love, to give up acres and degree,
 I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
 My near sweet view of Heaven, for earth with thee!

XXIV

LET the world's sharpness, like a claspings knife
 Shut in upon itself and do no harm
 In this close hand of Love, now soft and warm,
 And let us hear no sound of human strife
 After the click of the shutting. Life to life—
 I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
 And feel as safe as guarded by a charm
 Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife
 Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
 The lilies of our lives may reassure
 Their blossoms from their roots, accessible
 Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer;
 Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.
 God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXV

A HEAVY heart, Belovèd, have I borne
 From year to year until I saw thy face,
 And sorrow after sorrow took the place
 Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
 As the stringed pearls . . . each lifted in its turn
 By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace
 Were changed to long despairs, till God's own grace
 Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
 My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid me bring
 And let it drop adown thy calmly great
 Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
 Which its own nature doth precipitate,
 While thine doth close above it, mediating
 Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI

I LIVED with visions for my company,
 Instead of men and women, years ago,
 And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
 A sweeter music than they played to me.
 But soon their trailing purple was not free
 Of this world's dust,—their lutes did silent grow,
 And I myself grew faint and blind below
 Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come . . . to be,
 Belovèd, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
 Their songs, their splendours, (better, yet the same,
 As river-water hallowed into fonts)
 Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
 My soul with satisfaction of all wants—
 Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

XXVII

MY own Belovèd, who hast lifted me
 From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
 And, in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
 A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
 Shines out again, as all the angels see,
 Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
 Who camest to me when the world was gone,
 And I who looked for only God found *thee*!
 I find thee; I am safe, and strong, and glad.
 As one who stands in dewless asphodel,
 Looks backward on the tedious time he had
 In the upper life,—so I, with bosom swell,
 Make witness, here, between the good and bad,
 That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVIII

MY letters! all dead paper, . . mute and white!—
 And yet they seem alive and quivering
 Against my tremulous hands which loose the string
 And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
 This said, . . he wished to have me in his sight
 Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
 To come and touch my hand . . . a simple thing,
 Yet I wept for it!—this, . . the paper's light . .
 Said, *Dear, I love thee*; and I sank and quailed
 As if God's future thundered on my past.
 This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has paled
 With lying at my heart that beat too fast.
 And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill availed,
 If what this said, I dared repeat at last!

XXIX

I THINK of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud
 About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
 Put out broad leaves, and soon there's nought to see
 Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
 Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
 I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
 Who art dearer, better! Rather instantly
 Renew thy presence. As a strong tree should,
 Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare.
 And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee
 Drop heavily down, . . burst, shattered, everywhere!
 Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
 And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
 I do not think of thee— I am too near thee.

XXX

I SEE thine image through my tears to-night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How
Refer the cause?—Belovèd, is it thou,
Or I? who makes me sad? The acolyte
Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite,
May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's amen.
Belovèd, dost thou love? or did I see all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal,
For my soul's eyes? Will that light come again,
As now these tears come . . . falling hot and real?

XXXI

THOU comest! all is said without a word.
I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble through
Their happy eyelids from an unaverred
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue
The sin most, but the occasion . . . that we two
Should for a moment stand unministered
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,
Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears would rise,
With thy broad heart serenely interpose.
Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies
These thoughts which tremble when bereft of those
Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII

THE first time that the sun rose on thine oath
To love me, I looked forward to the moon
To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe;
And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
For such man's love!—more like an out of tune
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may float
'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced,—
And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.

XXXIII

YES, call me by my pet name! let me hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cowslips piled,
To glance up in some face that proved me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
Fond voices, which, being drawn and reconciled
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While I call God . . call God!—So let thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exanimate.
Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
And catch the early love up in the late.
Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
With the same heart, will answer, and not wait.

XXXIV

WITH the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee
As those, when thou shalt call me by my name—
Lo, the vain promise! is the same, the same,
Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?
When called before, I told how hastily
I dropped my flowers or break off from a game,
To run and answer with the smile that came
At play last moment, and went on with me
Through my obedience. When I answer now,
I drop a grave thought,—break from solitude;—
Yet still my heart goes to thee . . . ponder how . .
Not as to a single good, but all my good!
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV

IF I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And be all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors . . another home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried,
To conquer grief, tries more . . . as all things prove;
For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
Alas I have grieved so I am hard to love.
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
And fold within, the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI

WHEN we met first and loved, I did not build
 Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
 To last, a love set pendulous between
 Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
 Distrusting every light that seemed to gild
 The onward path, and feared to overlean
 A finger even. And, though I have grown serene
 And strong since then, I think that God has willed
 A still renewable fear . . . O love, O troth . . .
 Lest these enclaspèd hands should never hold,
 This mutual kiss drop down between us both
 As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.
 And Love, be false! if *he*, to keep one oath,
 Must lose one joy, by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII

PARDON, oh, pardon, that my soul should make
 Of all that strong divineness which I know
 For thine and thee, an image only so
 Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.
 It is that distant years which did not take
 Thy sovrantry, recoiling with a blow,
 Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
 Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
 Thy purity of likeness and distort
 Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit.
 As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
 His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
 Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort
 And vibrant tale, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII

FIRST time he kissed me, he but only kissed
 The fingers of this hand wherewith I write;
 And, ever since, it grew more clean and white, . . .
 Slow to world-greetings . . . quick with its 'Oh, list,'
 When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst
 I could not wear here, plainer to my sight,
 Than that first kiss. The second passed in height
 The first, and sought the forehead, and half missed,
 Half falling on the hair. O beyond need!
 That was the chrism of love, which love's own crown,
 With sanctifying sweetness did precede.
 The third upon my lips was folded down
 In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,
 I have been proud and said, 'My love, my own.'

HOMAGE TO

XXXIX

BECAUSE thou hast the power and own'st the grace
To look through and behind this mask of me,
(Against which years have beat thus blanchingly
With their rains,) and behold my soul's true face,
The dim and weary witness of life's race!—
Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,
The patient angel waiting for a place
In the new Heavens!—because nor sin nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighbourhood,
Nor all which others viewing, turn to go, . .
Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed, .
Nothing repels thee, . . Dearest, teach me so
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good.

XL

OH yes! they love through all this world of ours!
I will not gainsay love, called love forsooth.
I have heard love talked in my early youth,
And since, not so long back but that the flowers
Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans and Giaours
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth
For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth
Slips on the nut, if, after frequent showers,
The shell is over-smooth,—and not so much
Will turn the thing called love, aside to hate,
Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such
A lover, my Belovè! thou canst wait
Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to touch,
And think it soon when others cry, 'Too late!'

XLI

I THANK all who have loved me in their hearts,
'With thanks and love from mine. Deep thanks to all
Who paused a little near the prison-wall,
To hear my music in its louder parts,
Ere they went onward, each one to the mart's
Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall,
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot,
To hearken what I said between my tears, . .
Instruct me how to thank thee!—Oh, to shoot
My soul's full meaning into future years,
That *they* should lend it utterance, and salute
Love that endures, from Life that disappears!

XLII

'My future will not copy fair my past'—
I wrote that once; and thinking at my side
My ministering life-angel justified
The word by his appealing look upcast
To the white throne of God, I turned at last,
And there, instead, saw thee, not unallied
To angels in thy soul!—Then I, long tried
By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's staff
Gave out green leaves with morning dew's imperaled.
I seek no copy now of life's first half:
Leave here the pages with long musing curled,
And write me new my future's epigraph,
New angel mine, unhop'd for in the world!

XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

XLIV

BELOVED, thou hast brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer through
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of ours,
Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and bowers
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding: yet here's eglantine,
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not pine.
Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true,
And tell thy soul, their roots are left in mine.

Shall cast his shadow among men; and soon
 No lingering friend to care, nor old contemporary.—

He, I mean, whom once they pointed at
 In Rome and Florence: poet-putterer
 Among old pictures,
 Uncouth utterer
 Of obscure strictures,
 Styleless stutrer
 (Quoth his critics,
 Itching with their own enclitics),—
 Paracelsus!—how he sat
 In chilblain halls, Del Sarto-dippy,
 Robbia-mad, or Lippo Lippi,—
 Like some mage of alchemy,
 Grinding, in his cracked-brain crucible,
 Tortuous rhymes from radiant Titians
 Delving for the thence-deducible
 Dialogue soliloquy:
 Not to mention those musicians!
 Through the dilettantes' drawl
 At the Countess' musicale,
 What surmise you, English ogler,
 Of visions dreamed by old Abt Vogler,
 When you stare (nor note his frowning,
 Conscious of your own silk gowning)
 And pour at tea for Mr. Browning?
 Dust to dust: the large, the little,
 Ashes both! Who cares a tittle,
 At the teas of Goethe, Horace,
 Who wore satin, or who wore lace?
 Ashes all! even such as—Wait!
 What of *him*—even him, the speaker,
 Whose spirit, invoked, comes muffled through this
 weaker
 Organ of an alien poet,
 Pale, yet not all impassionate,
 Sounding subconscious chords, that flood and over-
 flow it,—
 Of him, *my* spirit, Rabbi,—what of him,
 My poisoning soul? Ah, since I died
 How has this soul of mine been multiplied
 By minds made pregnant with that seraph's fire,
 Whose touch conceptual made aspire
 Mine own from all the ages!
 Wherefore I deem—

No individual ghost,
Moored on some drifting coast,
Yearning from out the dark for daylight lost,
For youth's wild torch,
Wind-blown with joyous rages,
Hope's lifted latch and laughter in the porch,—
Not even now
For dear exchange of love's undying vow
With her that was the Aurora of my life,
My freed soul longs. For I, that lived, grew old
And died, am born again in beings manifold,
By grace of that which, once expressed,
Bequeaths to them the beautiful, the best,
That bloomed of me;
Whereby immortally
Their passions now partake
Of mine, of mine their raptures, their far wonder-quest.

So, in the spirits I pass through,
Still I create my own anew,
Broadened in scope; still I awake
Refreshed, in world-awakened eyes
Of all whom mine with thought imbue;
Still in my critics criticise,
Till, stretching the thrall'd spirit's cramp,
My art becomes an Arabian lamp
That, touched,—behold the genie rise!
Who bows his blazing form, and cries:
"Of all my Master's wealth—the true,
The beautiful, the strong, the wise—
Mortal, what may his servant bring?"

Hist, Rabbi!—What bird's that?—I smell the spring.
Soft!—Could it be my silk-girl caroling?

Never alone,
Lover of joy,
Delicate scorner
Of death and his dances,
Whether you be
Girl or boy,
Rapturous mourner
Of life and her fancies,
Never may you, never alone,

HOMAGE TO

Across the Dark didst flash the Light
Back to its primal Fount above,
Nor dream the Nothingness of Night
Could e'er bring forth the wings of Love,

Or close them! Speak to us, passionate soul
Crowned with rich grief, most strong, most wise,
Still point our weakness to the goal
That glorified thy constant eyes.

No facile flatterers of the hour
Dare mock the splendour of thy full hope,
Whose mail-clad words in rugged power,
Marched up, not down the Avernian slope.

No shallow hearts dare find thy faith
Shallow! Deep, deeper than the sea,
Abides the Love that stormed through Death,
And laid hold on Eternity.

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GREATHEART

(To Robert Browning)

BY AMELIA JOSEPHINE BURR

Lover of earth, great-hearted son of joy,
His the transcendent fulness of delight
Because life's cup,—too bitter-sweet to cloy,
Can yield no dregs to him who drinks aright.
Let Beauty veil her strangely as she would,
To his clear eyes, Love glowed in everything,
And since the heart of man he understood,
While men have hearts, he will not cease to sing.

"Life and Living," George H. Doran Company; published with permission.

TO ROBERT BROWNING

BY WITTER BYNNER

To tell the truth about you, Robert Browning,
I bring no wreath of laurel to your crowning
Save this: that no one who has loved—can doubt you,
Robert Browning.

An amateur of melody and hue,
Of marble outline and of Italy,
Of heresies and individuals
And every eccentricity of truth;
And yet an Englishman, a healthy brute
Loving old England, thrushes and the dawn;
A scholar loving polite gentleman;
A man of fashion loving the universe;
A connoisseur loving dead artists' lives,
Their names, their labors and their enemies;
A poet loving all the ways of words;
A human being giving love as love,
Denying death and proving happiness;—

When you love women, because youth loves women,
And when you love a woman, because heart
Understands heart through more than youth or age
Or time, and when you marvellously become
The man whom Carlyle and whom Landor love—
You are life's poet by a poet's life. . . .
But when you set yourself about with words,
Abracadabra, bric-a-brac and the dust
Of piled confusion, toying with obsolete
Prescriptions, and with owlish lenses hide
Your eyes until you marvellously become
A ponderous, pondering apothecary—
You dispense remedies, but not to me!
Let me take down your bulky book of records,
And find those certain pages where you tell
The beauty of a shoulder or reveal
The pure and simple permanence of love!
It is enough to learn, by a lazy glance
Through other passages, how you conserve
The true susceptibility and pathos
Of bishops, mediums and murderers,

HOMAGE TO

Manage the rhythm of fantastic souls,
Mark in the fault something to profit by:
Challenge the far perfection resident
In imperfection's opportunity,
And—more magnanimous than most of us—
Finding yourself in all humanity,
Forgive humanity for what you find.
You see, I know your text and care for it!
And though I will not hunt for it through all
Your dark old corners, I shall wait outside
And watch you through the windows and admire
The amazing industry with which you piece
Your manuscripts together to maintain
And to corroborate with many proofs
Your cheerful confidence in any man.

—Who would has heard me rank you, Robert Browning.
I bring no wreath of laurel to your crowning
Save this: that for your confidence—I thank you,
Robert Browning.

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BROWNING

BY RICHARD BURTON

Love that is triumph, music that leaps;
Glad on the heights, unabashed in the deeps;
Valiant and splendid, great righter of wrong,
Hail to the militant hero of Song!

From Boston Browning Society 1909-1910, p. 18; published with permission of the Society and the author.

IN PRAISE OF ROBERT BROWNING

(*On His Centenary*)

BY CALE YOUNG RICE

Away with trivial bays,
With wreaths and dithyrambs,
Upon this day of a myriad days
When a great heart came to walk earth's ways
And sing it free of shams.
To sing it free of the pale complaint
Of souls that will not climb;
And free of the petty coward taint
Of the cavillers at Time.
To gaze so clearly far
Into its mystic clod
As to be sure it is a star
Tilled by the touch of God!

*From "Wraiths and Realities," with permission of author
and of the Publisher.*

THE TWO NIGHTINGALES

(*Of the boy Browning, May, 1826*)

BY ARTHUR UPSON

'Twas in an English garden I heard tell
How, in the odorous early Spring one day,
Book-laden, the boy's mother bore away
Homeward from town to him the potent spell
Of Shelley's airy verses; how it fell,
By chance, with them fair other poems lay—
Those of one Keats; how thus the marvellous May
Broke on the dreaming boy of Camberwell
With new ecstatic music; and, that night,
As down his father's garden the lad strolled
Where fresh laburnums rained their pallid gold
Beneath the moon, how, sharing his delight,
Like spirits from out far, ringing Doric dales,
There sang to him two tranced nightingales!

London, May, 1907.

*Published with permission of Boston Browning Society
and of Mrs. Arthur Upson.*

BROWNING TO BEN EZRA

A Centenary Soliloquy

BY PERCY MACKAYE

I

A hundred years!—Hardly I understand:
Unriddle it, Rabbi. Through the Abbey stones
Hearken—the hushed and reverent monotones,
The shuffled feet, that pause! “Here lie his bones,
Who passed away
From earth, perhaps to heaven,
Aged seventy-seven;
Born on this self-same day,
The seventh May,
A century gone.”—Look, Rabbi! In my hand
I hold this little watch they call their world,
Open it with my thumb, where lo! each cog,
Each golden wheel, on star-gemmed axis whirled,
Pulses with delicate action.—Pray you, jog
My laggard mind once more.—They state, you say,
This was my timepiece; on this crystal face
I’d pore, and through dim introspections trace
The portent of the tickings underneath,
The mainspring of the action. May be so,
For you should know, Ben Ezra. All I know
Is, that the ticks grew fainter, as it slipped
Under my pillow. Then I fell asleep,
And have been busy dreaming. That was *death*,
They say,—death. Sudden the quick hair-spring skipped
A turn, trembled, and stopped short.—Much too deep
For me!—Somehow I don’t conceive the soul
Like to a watch unwound. Yet now, they say,
I am a poet who has passed away,
With many common millions, to a goal
Unkenned.—Here’s Limbo, then; and I, a shade,
Soliloquize now, in this cloistral corner,
Among pale forms of other ghosts forlorn,
With you, Ben Ezra, whom alive I made
The Rabbi of my rhyme.—A quaint conceit!
Suppose we grant it. So, then! Let us sit
On dust of kings and make a rhyme of it
Together—one dead poet and one rabbi
Conceived and born of him. While you keep tab, I

Will muse the elegy, and score our text:
R. Browning to Ben Ezra; adding next:
Suggested by the former's centenary,
 And after that—lest precious ears be vext—

Apologies for defunct vocabulary.

II

The question I would stress, then—pray allow—
 Is this: To pass away, is it to cease?
 But if so, *how* to cease? I said just now
 That, since my pillow muffled this timepiece,
 I have been busy dreaming. Ha, those dreams!
 In what frail shallops, what austere triremes,
 Unchartered cruisers, barks adventuresome,
 I have put forth on unimagined seas,
 And sailed—with what courageous companies!
 Nay, on no phantom ships! No guest needs fear
 A skinny-handed ancient mariner
 In me. I entertain with dice of doom
 No spectral crews. My fellow-voyagers were—
 And are, and shall be still—rich-blooded men,
 Rare-hearted women, lovers of this life
 And wrestlers with it, reckless of the strain.
 My visionary barks, those be my books,
 And I, whose bones consort here with the spooks,
 Am admiral there of dreamy argosies
 That ply 'twixt earth and heaven their perilous merchan-
 dise.

Perilous, yes; for dreams are perilous craft
 When they be manned by fierce doubts, fore and aft,
 Whose mutinous foreheads scan the heaven for signs,
 And menace their commander: "You, who planned
 Our questing voyage, show us the land—your land
 Of God, His promise! All the lone sea-lines
 Are dim with setting stars and stark with death;
 Yet you, who hold the rudder, answer *Faith!*
 And, once more, only *Faith!*" Thus curse my crews!
 I share their hearts, but overmaster them,
 And hold the rudder straight;
 Till now—a star above each plumèd stem—
 Lo, where my galleons, guided by their Muse,
 The surging planet circumnavigate—

Doubt kindling nobler doubt, faith quelling faith,
 Forms flung to revolution, creeds to rack,
 Old cities of dead empires put to sack,
 Love founding lordlier kingdoms in the future's track!

So, Rabbi, to our question, if you please:
 Is sailing thus—to cease?
 The ghosts demur;
 For, in the nudging vault, I hear one say:
 "Browning, the poet, who has passed away,
 This is his sepulcher."

III

Once a dawn-shaft from God's quiver
 Struck my soul, and from its embers
 Flashed a star of song forever.
 Then the dawn passed. Who remembers?
 Not remember Pippa?—Pippa who, at sun-up,
 Rose in her bare attic, while the east boiled gold!
 With her rising, see, the morning roses run up
 Clambering live and warm, concealing the night-mold.—

Pippa, she who sang till little Asolo
 Widened out its walls—like arms, that reach in pity
 To nestle lonely things that yearn for love—till, lo;
 Vines of Asolo enwall the heavenly city!

Pippa, she was Luigi, Ottima was Pippa,
 Mighty Monsignor, chafer, bee, and weevil;
 Life redeemed from listlessness, innocence from evil,
 Like the cinder-girl that wore the crystal slipper.

Well, well, Rabbi, so
 Now, as long ago,
 Even thoughts of Pippa
 Lilt another music, breathe an afterglow.
 What, then! Will they say
 She, that passed in song, she, too has passed away?

Trust me: as I used to sit and ponder,
 Songs, songs, songs she sang me, winged of wonder,
 Flitting sunward, till they quite forsook—
 Like happy birds from open cages—
 My black-barred pages.

But shyly three and four, with slantwise wing,
 Dartled from heaven back, and hovering
 Around my head,
 Sung my dear earth instead,
 Then nested down, beaks spilling, in my book,
 Splashing its margin with God's meadow-dew.—
 How cage and heart clapped to!
 When lo, all lamely, came a scant-winged few
 That fluttered, just outside the closing covers,
 Too late to slip between, and lingered nigh,
 Teasing with matin-tunes the twilit memory.
 Listen! There pipes one, now! Hark, while it hovers!

On passion's flower
 I poised for an hour,
 A little hour long,
 Ere I passed in song.

Stay! cried my lover
 Forsaken: *Faded*
Are love's endeavor
And all that made it!
Dead—dead!
 But far overhead
 Where faint stars hung,
 And low o'er the grass
 By the eddying river,
 Where poisoning moon-moths flickered
 and swung,
 I called to my lover
 Over and over:

I poise, I poise, I poise forever,
Because I pass.

IV

To poise—to pass away!
 Rabbi, beyond the high groins, rose and gray,
 Dimmed by the Minster's adumbrated day,
 How, browed in silence, broods my centenary,
 In silence, bred of dust
 And the dank charnel's must,
 That wraps these bones! Yes, *he* is passed away
 Forever more; nor London's warping mist,
 Nor Italy's keen amethyst,

Shall cast his shadow among men; and soon
 No lingering friend to care, nor old contemporary.—

He, I mean, whom once they pointed at
 In Rome and Florence: poet-putterer
 Among old pictures,
 Uncouth utterer
 Of obscure strictures,
 Styleless stutrer
 (Quoth his critics,
 Itching with their own enclitics),—
 Paracelsus!—how he sat
 In chilblain halls, Del Sarto-dippy,
 Robbia-mad, or Lippo Lippi,—
 Like some mage of alchemy,
 Grinding, in his cracked-brain crucible,
 Tortuous rhymes from radiant Titians
 Delving for the thence-deducible
 Dialogue soliloquy:
 Not to mention those musicians!
 Through the dilettantes' drawl
 At the Countess' musicale,
 What surmise you, English ogler,
 Of visions dreamed by old Abt Vogler,
 When you stare (nor note his frowning)
 Conscious of your own silk gowning)
 And pour at tea for Mr. Browning?
 Dust to dust: the large, the little,
 Ashes both! Who cares a tittle,
 At the teas of Goethe, Horace,
 Who wore satin, or who wore lace?
 Ashes all! even such as—Wait!
 What of *him*—even him, the speaker,
 Whose spirit, invoked, comes muffled through this
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 Organ of an alien poet,
 Pale, yet not all impassionate,
 Sounding subconscious chords, that flood and over-
 flow it,—
 Of him, *my* spirit, Rabbi,—what of him,
 My poisoning soul? Ah, since I died
 How has this soul of mine been multiplied
 By minds made pregnant with that seraph's fire,
 Whose touch conceptual made aspire
 Mine own from all the ages!
 Wherefore I deem—

No individual ghost,
Moored on some drifting coast,
Yearning from out the dark for daylight lost,
For youth's wild torch,
Wind-blown with joyous rages,
Hope's lifted latch and laughter in the porch,—
Not even now
For dear exchange of love's undying vow
With her that was the Aurora of my life,
My freed soul longs. For I, that lived, grew old
And died, am born again in beings manifold,
By grace of that which, once expressed,
Bequeaths to them the beautiful, the best,
That bloomed of me;
Whereby immortally
Their passions now partake
Of mine, of mine their raptures, their far wonder-quest.

So, in the spirits I pass through,
Still I create my own anew,
Broadened in scope; still I awake
Refreshed, in world-awakened eyes
Of all whom mine with thought imbue;
Still in my critics criticise,
Till, stretching the thrall'd spirit's cramp,
My art becomes an Arabian lamp
That, touched,—behold the genie rise!
Who bows his blazing form, and cries:
"Of all my Master's wealth—the true,
The beautiful, the strong, the wise—
Mortal, what may his servant bring?"

Hist, Rabbi!—What bird's that?—I smell the spring.
Soft!—Could it be my silk-girl caroling?

Never alone,
Lover of joy,
Delicate scorner
Of death and his dances,
Whether you be
Girl or boy,
Rapturous mourner
Of life and her fancies,
Never may you, never alone,

HOMAGE TO

Utter your ecstasy,
Make your moan.

Garland your hair;
Wind, come unwind it!
Hide away care;
Kind heart, come find it!

Winter, you gnome,
Shrunken and shrilly,
Shut Love in her tomb;
Tut!—willy, nilly,
Love through the loam
Unlocks with a lily!

Starlight or stone,
Nothing's its own!

V

Fluent through all flows all, as the Greek saith:
The drowned stone ripples the starlight, even as death
The living waters,
With widening discs of light. No sparrow falls
But gray-stoled choirs revive his matinals
With incense fresh of dawn.—You, Rabbi, friend,
Soul-fellow, busy with me to the end,
Crunching with poet-pestles and rhyme-mortars
Conundrums for the mind to apprehend,
Bear witness with me to this paradox:
What's permanent must pass. All spirit-shocks,
Numbness and pain, arise
Conceiving otherwise.
For Beauty is the flowing of the soul
Without impediment, the effect being joy;
So with a ripple may reveal her whole
Eternal ocean. But the child says: "See!
My earth is stable; sun and stars spin wild."
Not so the man: "Our earth spins dizzily
Round the fixed sun." The poet (man and child)
Peers in the sun, imagining he sees—
Beyond his face—the shadowy vortices,
Vast suction and compulsions of the soul.
"Beyond the sun," he sings, "beyond—our goal
Is God!" Last pries the seer: "Him whom so far

Ye seek, yourselves consider what you are
 And find Him: stars aspiring *to be*,
 Life from itself evolving soul—such He!
 Time's runner, not Time's stake; Spring's sap, not sod;
 Man's orbit, not his planet—such is God.”
 Vouch, then, Ben Ezra, through the texts we glozed
 Of earth's philosophies, I still opposed
 The fixed, immutable. *To slake his thirst*,
 You said, there lives our soul's utility—
 His thirst unquenchable, for Whom also she,
 My silk-girl, sang: *There is no last nor first!*
 Therefore through all
 The chambers of His spirit, as I passed
 In changing rôles—to lift the dim tent-flap
 (As David) and behold where hung huge Saul,
 Supine,
 Gigantic, serpentine,
 From the cross-beam; or, through the black storm-gap,
 Panting beneath a woman's hair
 (As Sebald), to watch—now here, now there—
 Blind lightnings stab the dark; thence to unfold
 Before the quiet eyes of Cleon
 His epos on its burning plates of gold;
 Else watch, in Spring of another eon
 (Curled like the finger of an infant faun),
 The prying crocus crimson through the lawn,
 Idling, without other care,
 In England, when my April's there;—
 Still it was mine, and *is*, in dreams
 To search beyond the world that seems,
 And flash before my fellow-men,
 Kindling His image to their ken,
 Glimpses of that God-man, who wills yet to *become*,
 Ever for Whom,
 In future as in past,
 There is nor first nor last.

VI

But hark! Above our vault,
 Rabbi, the footsteps halt,
 The organ rolls the chant processionary.
 Relinquish here this dust;
 Accomplish there Time's trust;
 Ascend with me beyond this centenary.

HOMAGE TO

Go forth, for we are young!
Time's song is yet unsung;
Let our glad voices mingle with God's mass.
You, Rabbi, on my right,
Before us both—His light:
Through men's dear world, with Pippa, still I pass!

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IMAGINATION

(Written for the Occasion)

BY EDWIN MARKHAM

Blithe Fancy lightly builds with airy hands
Or on the edges of the darkness peers,
Breathless and frightened at the Voice she hears:
Imagination (lo! the sky expands)
Travels the blue arch and Cimmerian sands—
Homeless on earth, the pilgrim of the spheres,
The rush of light before the hurrying years,
The voice that cries in unfamiliar lands.

Men weigh the moons that flood with eerie light
The dusky vales of Saturn—wood and stream;
But who shall follow on the awful sweep
Of Neptune through the dim and dreadful deep?
Onward he wanders in the unknown night,
And we are shadows moving in a dream.

*From New York Browning Society, 1912, p. 3; published
with permission of Society and the author.*

THE YEAR'S AT THE SPRING

BY SARA TEASDALE

(*For R. B.'s Anniversary*)

I said, "I shall weave my poet
A song of shining words"—
But thro' the open window
I heard the call of birds.

They said, "He wants no praising
From those who stay indoors;
Come into the house with walls of air
And grass upon the floors."

I followed the grey birds' calling
To a shimmering poplar tree
That shook in the silver sunlight
The leaves that spring set free.

I thought I should sing in its shadow,
For the leaves were half unfurled,
But the wind went by me laughing,
Bound for the rim of the world.

It said, "He wants no praising
Of dreamers by a tree;
Come follow, for I climb at last
The hills that hide the sea."

"And if in far sea-faring
Your praise should still be mute,
The wordless song your heart will sing
Is more than a well-tuned lute."

"They praise him best who follow
In starlight or in rain
The winding ways of wind and men
That turn not back again."

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Boston Transcript.*

HOMAGE TO

INVOCATION

Robert Browning 7 May, 1912

BY PERCY MACKAYE

I

Poet of the vast potential,
Curious-minded, quintessential
Prober of passion, ample-hearted
Lover of lovers, virile-arted
Robert Browning, plotter of plays,
Leaven us in these latter days!

*Now in rebirth,
Renewing Time's festa
Spring—the wild quester—
Quickens the earth.*

II

Not mere being, but becoming
Makes us vital. Stript from numbing
Vestiture of self-complacence
Naked for our soul's renascence,
Robert Browning, riddler of hearts,
Pierce us with your singing darts!

*Sharp through the sod,
Flower-tipped for His aiming,
Shoot now the flaming
Spear-heads of God.*

III

Not our prayer-stool, but our passion
Makes us holy. Thus to fashion
Psalm and *Credo* to a human
Ritual of Man and Woman,
Robert Browning, purger of souls,
Heap on us your passion-coals!

*So let aspire—
As now this young season—
Spirit and reason
In flower and fire!*

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Page Thirty-eight

AN INVOCATION

(*On the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of
Robert Browning*)

BY FRANCIS MEDHURST

Rabbi Ben Ezra—thou, whose valiant spirit
Hath plumbed the riddle of the rolling spheres,
Who, far aloof from mortal hopes and fears,
The fulness of thy calling dost inherit—
If in some wondrous wise our thought may reach
The region where thou dwellest, and our speech
May pierce the lofty calm of thine estate,
Take this the homage from our hearts upwinging!
Know, mighty master, that thy message ringing
Still lifts us skyward, thine ensample great
Still shows ideals that we strive in singing
To keep inviolate.

Thou wast both seer and prophet; through the thunder
Of all thy deep-mouthed harmonies there runs
A strain pythonic that beyond the suns
Thrills in thy major C, the tone of wonder.
Ah! Couldst thou lend it us for one brief hour,
Whisper within our ears that word of power,
Should we not sing, indeed, who now must fail,
Strive how we may, to catch the chords upwelling
From those high choirs wherefrom thy songs are swelling,
Who find our feeble notes of no avail
To voice the half-formed thought for whose forthtelling
Our harps are all too frail.

Behold, the mighty bards are wrapped in slumber;
No soul titanic sets the world on fire;
Apollo's fane is bare, unstrung his lyre!
The tale of all our minstrels one might number
And find none fit to mate his muse to thine;
Our altar fires bear flames but half divine.
Strive, if thou may'st, to burst the bonds that bar!
Bid thy strong spirit, clothed with raiment mortal,
Re-enter life by birth's unfolding portal
And, in thy pity for our voiceless star,
Inform anew some singer all immortal
In one last avatar!

From the Boston Evening Transcript, May 4, 1912; published with the permission of the editor.

HOMAGE TO

BROWNING

BY MADISON CAWEIN

Master of human harmonies, where song
And harp and violin and flute accord;
Each instrument proclaiming you its lord
There in the deathless Orchestra of Song;
Albeit at times your music may sound wrong
To our dull senses, and its meaning barred
To mortal understanding—never marred
Is your high message, clear, of trumpet tongue.

Poet, revealer, who both soon and late
Within an age of doubt kept strong your faith,
Crying your cry that with the world all's well—
What wizard powers upon your word await,
To rout the darkness from the House of Death,
And fill it, triumphant, with Life's organ swell!

*From "The Cup of Comus." Published with permission
of all parties concerned. Recognition is made to Mrs.
Rose de Vaux-Roger of the Cameo Press of New York,
Otto A. Rothert, Literary Executor to Madison Ca-
wein and to Madison (formerly Preston) Cawein, sole
heir to the poet.*

TO BROWNING

BY EDWIN MARKHAM

You plumbed the timeless tides that wash the shoal
Of Time, and from your cliff of vision saw
The streaming Will whose other name is Law.
You sang the urge of the imperious soul,
Winged with its dream, and pressing toward the goal—
Sang of the soul whose flying steps are fate
As it goes searching for the secret gate,
Where each must bring his very all for toll.

O Poet, vanished from our mortal day,
Send back some signal from the upward way,
Send back a whisper from the seraph height:
What word for man? will he at last arrive?
Answer again out of your larger light:
The stars are crumbling—will the soul survive?

*New York Browning Society, 1912; published with per-
mission of author and of the Society.*

THE CAMBERWELL GARDEN

BY RICHARD BURTON

*(Browning was born May 7th, at Camberwell, a suburb
of London)*

May hath her own blithe beauty, nor doth need
The other loveliness of human deed
And human fellowship; yet doubly fair
She seems to brood o'er Camberwell, since there
Once walked the lad who made of blooms and birds
His cronies, knew their winsome ways and words.

Far did he wander; many a mile away
And many a year, he saw the face of May
Rosy, recurrent, in Italian nooks
Uplifting summer arms and siren looks.
This month of melody and warmth and shine
Is welcome to the heart of man as wine!

Ah, but at Camberwell each sound and sight
And scent—sure ministers to his delight—
Were interwoven with dewy memories
Stronger and sweeter than from overseas;
And wheresoe'er his feet in faring turned,
Whiles, for that garden-place he must have yearned.

He who comes back to greet an old, dear friend,
And finds him gone, knows it is not the end,
But lovingly awaits the gladder day
When all friends gather in from far-away.
So maiden May comes back and waits for him
In grass and flower and every greening limb.

* * * * *

Long gone the garden, and the singer too
Sleeps elsewhere; but still the sky is blue,
Spring scents are rife, old magic still beguiles,
And May in Camberwell recalls, and smiles.

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HOMAGE TO

A BIRTHDAY

BY CHARLOTTE PORTER

Forces unknown of birthdays new—
Life's miracles are they!
A hundred years have but found true
The worth of one May day.

Then, that most puny, potent thing—
A baby life was born,
Whose unguessed force-of-joy to sing,
Lasts like a May unworn.

I think the ripened soul that sung—
"Grow old along with me!"—
Cries,—Wonder is from each instant sprung!
Keep your soul young to see!

From New York Browning Society, 1912, p 121; published with permission of the Society and of the author.

BROWNING

BY RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

So many books are gone, lost in the mind,
Nurture forgotten; once on fancy's tongue
Sweet to the taste; many a honeyed song.
Yea! and deep-thoughted fruit with bitter rind:
Browning goes not. As when a boy, I find
Still the old magic master loved so long;
Here still the strength that still can make me strong,
Still the delight of mountains still behind.

And still among the rocks and stars of speech
The sudden silver singing of a bird,
Perched on the craggy ridges of his thought,
Too high 'twould seem to sing—still out of reach
Of the world's ear, that hardly yet hath caught
The music hidden in the gnarled word.

From the Boston Evening Transcript, May 4, 1912; published with permission of the editor.

IN PRAISE OF BROWNING

BY CHARLOTTE PORTER

Of loveliness, and all the fair
In Life, the perfect, choice, and rare—
The bloom of deeds,
Most poets tell:
They with the love of Beauty swell
The heart of Man; and this is well.
But Browning moves to love of life,
Oft-failing yet aspiring strife
Tow'rd Beauty's seeds—
The sleeping spore
Such love of life can wake to soar
Within each heart: O this is more!

With growing light through ages shine
The visions of the Love Divine
Of God made man:
So seers still win
A hope for mortals, spite of sin,
And life is bless'd since that hath been.
But Browning's vivid eye discerns
God in each heart where pure love burns:
Where Spirit ran,
Flashing strange spells,
Transcendent love in might upwells;
God's witness thus in each Soul dwells.

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BROWNING

BY ROBERT ADGER BOWEN

As when amid some vast orchestral din
The organ's deep majestic sound is heard;
So doth thy voice with Life's great mystery stirred,
Sweep o'er the strife of flute and violin.

*From Bookman, Vol. 4; published with the permission
of the editor.*

HOMAGE TO

TO ROBERT BROWNING

BY AGNES LEE

He who leaves a glimmer of his soul
In a bit of marble, in a song,
He shall win the unseen aureole
Set above the stars the ages long,
And the fleeting import of his days
Echoes of eternity shall praise.

We of earth thy mastery would hail,
Iron hand that shook the gates of art,
Crumpled rock to ridge's flowering trail,
Yours, O feet, that, following no chart,
Forged a future, or in spaces free
Walked the winding floor of some old sea.

Poet of life's ordinances deep—
Cities lying restless in the night,
Tossing, turning ere they fall asleep—
Meadow-streams in peace of pale moonlight,
We, the tossing city, we, the stream,
Share thy noble heritage of dream!

Ah! There is a name within thy name
Known to love and lyric everywhere,
Lettered on the heart in strokes of flame,
Hers who wrought in love's encloistered air
Gathering the guerdon of her hours,
Holding up to thee and heaven her flowers.

Call we unto her, thou art in sight,
Call we unto thee, she glides to us.
And before the garden of delight
Where forever song is tremulous
Two belovèd forms Time radiates,
Passing in together through the gates.

ROBERT BROWNING

TO ROBERT BROWNING

BY HELEN A. CLARKE

"Say not we know, but rather that we love,
And so we know enough." Thus deeply spoke
The Sage; and in men's stunted hearts awoke
A haunting fear, for fain are they to prove
Their life, their God, with yeas and nays that move
The mind's uncertain flow. Then fierce outbroke,—
Knowledge, the child of pain shall we revoke?
The guide wherewith men climb to things above?
Nay, calm your fears! 'Tis but the mere mind's knowing,
The soul's alone the poet worthy deeming.
Let mind up-build its entities of seeming
With toil and tears! The toil is but for showing
How much there lacks of truth. But 'tis no dreaming
When sky throbs back to heart, with God's love beaming.

*From Browning and His Century, p. 2, published with
permission of the author.*

ROBERT BROWNING

BY AUBREY DE VERE

His feast of Life was rich—this life of ours:
All human things 'neath yonder azure cope
For him were deep in meaning, wide in hope.
Nor those alone: above our brakes and bowers
Mad dance he saw of Genii scattering flowers.
His fancy kept a key strange gates to ope;
Became at will that quaint kaleidoscope
Which turns all shapes to patterns, then devours
The last to fashion new. His grasp was large;
He knew that, with the suffering heart of man
Compared, all matter-worlds but fill a span.
His Song had shafts that pierced a spirit-target;
Its flight outsoared the agnostic poet-clan,
Faithful to humblest Song's implicit charge.

*From Harper's New Monthly Magazine—Vol. 80:931;
published with the permission of the editor.*

HOMAGE TO

MESMERISM

BY EZRA POUND

"And a cat's in the water-butt."—Robert Browning.

Aye, you're a man that! ye old mesmerizer!
Tyin' your meanin' in seventy swadelin's,
One must of needs be a hang'd early riser
To catch you at worm turning. Holy Odd's bodykins!

"Cat's i' the water-butt!" Thought's in your verse-barrel,
Tell us this thing rather, then we'll believe you,
You, Master Bob Browning, spite your apparel
Jump to your sense and give praise as we'd lief do.

You wheeze as a head-cold, long-tonsiled Calliope,
But, God! What a sight you ha' got o' our in'ards,
Mad as a hatter but surely no Myope,
Broad as all ocean and leanin' mankin'ards.

Heart that was big as the bowels of Vesuvius,
'Words that were wing'd as her sparks in eruption,
Eagled and thundered as Jupiter Pluvius,
Sound in your wind past all signs o' corruption.

Here's to you, Old Hippety-hop o' the accents,
True to the Truth's sake and crafty dissector,
You grabbed at the gold sure; had no need to pack cents
Into your versicles. Clear sight's elector!

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BROWNING

BY SARA TAWNEY LEFFERTS

We love him since, a man, he makes us see
What the true stature of a man should be;
And being poet, he has made us feel
That truth, the highest thing soul can reveal,
Each in himself may find and body forth,
Sharing the poet's mind, the poet's worth.

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Page Forty-six

ROBERT BROWNING

THE TWO BOBBIES

BY BLISS CARMAN

Bobbie Burns and Bobbie Browning,
They're the boys I'd like to see,
Though I'm not the boy for Bobbie,
Bobbie is the boy for me!

Bobbie Browning was the good boy;
Turned the language inside out;
Wrote his plays and had his days,
Died—and held his peace, no doubt.

Poor North Bobbie was the bad boy,—
Bad, bad, bad, bad Bobbie Burns!
Loved and made the world his lover,
Kissed and barleycorned by turns.

London's dweller, child of wisdom,
Kept his council, took his toll;
Ayrshire's vagrant paid the piper,
Lost the game—God save his soul!

Bobbie Burns and Bobbie Browning,
What's the difference, you see?
Bob the lover, Bob the lawyer;
Bobbie is the boy for me!

From "Songs From Vagabondia;" published by kind permission of the authors.

ROBERT BROWNING

BY MARY A. WOODS

The paths of night and death unscathed he trod,
His eye still fixed where, pale in whitening skies,
Love's herald-star assured a sun's uprise,
And darkness slain, and earth "afire with God."

From Living Age, Vol. 231, p. 528; published with permission of the editor.

ROBERT BROWNING'S BIRTHDAY

BY WILLIAM HARMAN VAN ALLEN

For what masterpiece to praise him, Browning, poet of
the height?

For Sordello, dreaming idly till he dies to win his fight?

Or for Pippa, gaily singing on the streets of Asolo

Like a bird of God whose liltings with a benison o'erflow?

For the marvellous musicians, Abbot Vogler and the rest,

And the painters, half-forgotten, whose dim colors gleam
their best

In the light he pours upon them? Is it Venice, Florence,
Rome,

Where the thaumaturge we honor shows his genius most
at home?

Evelyn, the Duchess, Waring, Karshish, ever-blessèd
John,

Saul, Ben Ezra, Paracelsus, exquisite Balaustion:

All immortal, since he limned them with his own creative
art.

But from out them all I single one as lady of my heart,
Standing altogether lovely in her liliated innocence.

What though hell itself assailed her? She had Michael
for defense,

And, for pattern and consoler, holy Mary, Mother-Maid.

So I dare to canonize her, saint and martyr, unafraid.

And this laurel-leaf I offer to our poet, gratefully,
Painter of Pompilia's portrait, perfect in her purity.

*Tributes read May 7, 1907, from the Boston Browning
Society, 1909-1910, p. 11; published with permission
of the Society.*

ROBERT BROWNING

BY MARIE ADA MOLINEUX

With the sunrise woke his life
Flushed with all Youth's noble hopes,
Brighter growing as the sun
Climbed toward the mountain-slopes.

As the midday glows with light
So his glorious manhood came;
Giving hope to all oppressed
Shone his beacon-light of fame.

When the sunset splendors spread
In that loved yet alien land
Sister, son and nations mourned—
Glad he clasped a spirit hand!

In our night the stars that shine
Are the memories of him;
Through the centuries to come
Guide they surely, nor grow dim.

*From the Boston Browning Society, 1909-1910, p. 25,
and published with permission of the author.*

BROWNING

BY DOROTHEA LAWRENCE MANN

Master, about whose laurelled head the years
Fame's fairest, richest aureole have bound,
We, too, within the closing century's round
Would tribute bring thee in thy starry spheres,—
Love of our hearts and all our gladdening fears
We bring to thee, our master-warrior, found
Triumphant in life's battles,—victor crowned
By voice of all earth's prophets and her seers.

O magic builder, through thy strong-winged song,
Thy pinions swept life's farthest deeps of air
And soaring still thy living spirit sways—
A wind of fire that stirs like a mighty throng
Of counselling actions, visioning fair
Body and spirit through man's length of days.

*From the Boston Evening Transcript, May 4, 1912;
published with permission of the editor.*

HOMAGE TO

ROBERT BROWNING

BY MARGARET WIDDEMER

The world has said in its need since the work of the
world began,
"Fair is the song to heed, so what need we ask of the
man?
Praise for the flame-pure song; what matter the folk
that sing?
Let them hold duty a shame and honor a little thing!
Words in a noble flood, and if hearts shall be crushed
beneath,
There must be drops of blood for the gems of the laurel-
wreath."

But this bard stood to his word; his life to his lyre rang
true;
He held by the truths he spoke; the honor he praised
he knew;
And where his torch burned high with a steady, joyful
spark,
He heard a wonderful cry that sang and sobbed in the
dark.
His strong hands stretched to the shade and lifted the
captive free;
Close by him, unafraid, she chanted more perfectly.
Down through her years till night still held they the
great dream higher,
Clear to the sad world's sight a pulsing of star-white fire.

Aye, through his years alone of playing the brave world
part
Ever the star-fire shone as vestal-clear in his heart;
Changeless his faith and brave, and dauntless his steady
sight,
Watching across her grave to a tryst in the unknown
light.
Loyal comrade and guide, noble poet and friend,
Yet beyond all beside true lover and knight to the end!

*From the Century Magazine, Vol. 85, No. 3, p. 416;
published with permission of the author.*

ON THE HEIGHTS

BY MRS. BLOOMFIELD MOORE

I cannot write for fulness of content;
Poems are born as thunders are, from out
The strife of elements to purify
The stagnant air. So high I stand, so near
To heaven, nor strife nor passion's sultry breath
Can reach me here. When hearts are full as mine
Few are the words which break—as bubbles break
The quiet surface of an ocean deep
When cradled into calm—few are the words,
I ween, that stir the sweet content when hearts
Are still; but, ere we met, one whom I loved,
Back from a new-made grave, had stepped to stab
Me in the dark; and all my wrongs arose
To sweep my heart-strings with their myriad hands.
As wakes the wild wind-harp, so woke my lyre,
And strain on strain escaped until the storm
Of tortured feeling ceased within the calm
Of thy blest presence. Lost my riches were,
And wrecked the barque which held my all in life.
I stood in terror on the rock-girt shore,
No voice to pity, and no arms to save—
Fearing the worst, nor hoping aught of man!
Anon, the darkness lifted, and I saw,
Riding at anchor, on the treacherous sea,
A noble ship, laden to edge with all
Which makes life sweet and strong. It brought thy
hand
Out-stretched, to which I clung—with hungry heart
And famished soul eating the angels' food
Proffered in largess such as great souls yield.
There is no wealth like that which thou hast given
To me—no riches like the treasure thou
Hast poured from founts exhaustless of thine own!
I who was poor am rich! I bring my lyre
And break it at thy feet: its need is o'er,
Since discord and despair can strike its strings
No more. Thou art my friend! no greater boon
Hath earth to give than friendship such as thine!

From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 108.

HOMAGE TO

ROBERT BROWNING

BY ROBERT BUCHANAN

Bearded like some strong shipman, with a beam
Of grey orbs glancing upward at the sky,
O friend, thou standest, pondering thy theme,
And watching while the troublous days blow by
Their cloudy signs and portents; then thine eye
Falleth, and reading with poetic gleam
The human lineaments that round thee lie,
Peers to the soul, and softens into dreams.
O dweller in the winds and waves of life,
Reader of living faces foul and fair,
No nobler mariner may mortal meet!
Stedfast and sure thou movest thro' the strife,
Knowing the signs and symbols of the air,
Yet gentle as the dews about thy feet.

From Browning Society Papers, Part I, p. 100.

THE POET'S WAY

BY J. B. OLDHAM

Chain the poet to your table,
Bind his soul with silken chains,
While you probe with patient science
In the bell-shaped bit of brains
For the secret source whence springeth
Such a marvel of sweet strains;

Still the reason will be hidden
From your analytic gaze
Why the poet sometimes uses
Such queer complicated phrase,
For a poet moves as God does,
In a thousand secret ways.

From Browning Society Papers, Vol. 11, p. 329.

TO BROWNING

BY CLEMENT G. CLARKE

Thou are so sure! and yet thou speak'st of things
Which have eternal weight. Thy song is fraught
With proofs of that which saint and seer have sought
In vain to demonstrate; what spirit brings
Thee surety? Others hope; thou says't, "I know—
The spirit is immortal." Hast thou seen
From Patmos Isle the vision? art serene
Because thy faith—or sight—hath made thee so?
We question not; but for thy confidence
In that which was our mothers' ground of trust
We thank thee—thou, so nobly learn'd, so just
In judgment, thought, and feeling; so intense
In all that makes a man.—We give thee praise
And thanks, thou trusting soul, midst doubting days.

*From Outlook, 52:97; published with the permission
of the editor.*

TO ROBERT BROWNING

Poet, Secr, Philosopher

BY ERIC MACKEY

I knew thee first as one may know the fame,
Of some apostle, as a man may know
The mid-day sun, far-shining o'er the snow.
I hail'd thee prince of poets! I became
Vassal of thine, and warm'd me at the flame
Of thy pure thought, my spirit all aglow
With dreams of peace, and pomp, and lyric show,
And all the splendors, Browning! of thy name.
But now, a man reveal'd, a guide for men,
I see thy face, I clasp thee by the hand;
And though the Muses in thy presence stand,
There's room for my to loiter in thy ken.
O lordly soul! O wizard of the pen!
What news from God? What word from Fairy-
land?

From Browning Society Papers, Feb. 22, 1889, p. 329.

BROWNING AT "THE CENCI"

May 7, 1886

BY J. J. BRITTON

To Shelley's festival, we keep to-day,
Comes, honored guest, with genial smile, the man,
Whom we name *first* of all the poet clan
Now drawing breath; and so our glances stray
To where he sits attentive; whilst the grey,
Cold cloak of misery, that grows alway
Wraps Beatrice—till, from the ruthless ban
Comes *peace*, outsmitten by the axe's sway.

Ave! dead singer, caught by hungry seas
That swept upon thee, swamping half thy song,
Great as thou wert, a greater yet is here.
Hail! living singer, mayest thou tarry long
Among us, love us, weave, with harmonies
Grave thoughts of power to calm life's fret and fear.

From Browning Society Papers, Part 8, p. 147.

MOUNTAIN-BIRTH

(*On The Ring and the Book*)
How It Strikes a Contemporary.

BY ALFRED FORMAN

"The mountain would be better were its snow
A furlong wider on the sunset side;
Or farther had its pines crept up to hide
The scars it gathered in its rising-throe;
The torrent, as it seems to me below,
Might well have ventured from its line to swerve
Into the semblance of a purer curve
Before the precipice received its flow."
So the coeval critic; yet its head
The mountain still shoots up to keep from sun
Or thunder safe the vale beneath it spread.
The critic's word was over soon and done.
The mountain, hardly rooted in its bed,
Its deathless duties had not yet begun.

From Browning Society Papers, Part 8, p. 120.

WHAT COMES TO PERFECTION PERISHES

BY SARAH A. BENNETT

"What comes to perfection perishes"—
Yet ah! the bloom on the vine!
The velvet sheen of its garlanded green,
And the purple, purple wine!

"What comes to perfection perishes"—
The wild rose wreathed in a pall,
Just kissed by the sun, then her race is run:
Let the waxen petals fall!

"What comes to perfection perishes"—
From its stem you sever the spray,
But those heather bells from the mountain fells
Shall ring their chime away.

"What comes to perfection perishes"—
Slips from the hold of our hand,
But *lives* in its place (as a beautiful face)
In the perfectly beautiful Land.

From Browning Society Papers, Part 10, p. 228.

TO A BROWNING POEM

BY JAMES L. HUGHES

I read you many times before,
And thought you clear and true;
Today I read your lines once more
And found a message new.

Why did you not reveal to me
That message long ago?
"Because you had not power to see;
You had to wait and grow.

"Live out the message of today,
And when you read again,
Your vision will have stronger ray
For higher message then."

*From "Songs of Gladness;" published with permission of
the author.*

DEDICATION OF POEMS
TO MY FRIEND ROBERT BROWNING

BY MRS. CLARA JESSOP MOORE

Thou wilt not turn away—thou wilt not say,
“I care not for such sad, wild strains as these,
I care not for pale field-flowers like to thine,
Nor yet for fractured stones though set in gold.”
Thou wilt bend over them, and from thy eyes
Some pitying drops will fall to give them worth.
A beggar might choose pebbles by the road,
As well, to take unto a king, whose crown
Is set with gems:—a peasant better could
Choose wayside flowers, and bear them to a queen
Whose palace gardens glow in gorgeous blaze
Of tropic hues. The king, the queen, might turn
In cold disdain; but thou, the king of men,
Wilt say, “No flower but that to me is sweet,
Which love or friendship places at my feet.”

*From Poems, “The Modern Pilgrim’s Progress” and
“Slander and Gossip.”*

A GREETING TO BROWNING LOVERS

BY RUTH BALDWIN CHENERY

Lovers of Robert Browning, could we praise
Our Poet-Master in a dreamy verse,
That born and steeped in music, might rehearse
His mighty genius, building phrase on phrase,

He scarce would thank us; for the victor bays
Are green about his brow, and no reverse
Can ever dim them: fame howe’er perverse,
No more can vex him with her long delays.

O, let us feel like him the joy of life;
The throstle’s singing and the hawthorne flower
Cheered his whole soul, and nothing mean or sad

Made him despair that man shall rise through strife;
“God’s in His heaven!” we will not flinch or cower,
So shall we make the Heart of Browning glad.

*From “At Vesper Time,” p. 48, with permission of the
author.*

BROWNING

BY MILES M. DAWSON

This was the prince of suitors. He divined
The subtle cravings of a woman's mind—
Her sense of worth, of pride and dignity.
These plumbed he tenderly, unerringly,
Whether poor Pippa or the jilted queen
Or fleeing duchess ventures on the scene.

This was the master-wooer; for he knew
That he who loves sublimely need not sue,
That the mute adoration of the soul
Which is her very being, doth control
Her every impulse for him and her flesh,
As the rapt spirit's counterpact, enmesh.

This was the royal lover. This was he
Who knew, and was, what all lovers should be.
To him the love of woman was a thing
So sacred that no other offering—
Not life, not honor, not whate'er men prize—
Is pure or precious with it in his eyes.

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BROWNING

BY JEANIE PEET

Near a great forest, one cried out "Obscure!"
As if it angered him; the other, "True;
Yet none the less those shadowed deeps allure.
Keep to the sanded alleys, friend! For you
Such paths were laid. 'Tis one good reason more
Why I prefer the forest to explore.

"Just where the thick-starred tapestry of vines
Seems to say 'No admittance', look, they part!
Far sweep the fragrant vistas through the pines.
Obscure! Like nature, like the human heart."

*From the Century Magazine, Vol. 72, No. 2, p. 253;
published with permission of editor.*

HOMAGE TO

TO BROWNING

BY PAKENHAM BEATTY

None love in vain; for God, who will not take
His least gift back, takes not the heavenliest one;
None of his faithful will Love's heart forsake,
Though death make dumb the spring and dark the sun.

The dead are always with us everywhere,
Unseen of mortal eyes, yet unremoved,
Those gracious ghosts that make the twilight fair,
The souls that lighted ours, and hearts that loved.

No nightingale sings for the rose alone,
But the least leaf may share his gift of song;
So, while the many mourners make their moan,
I, least of all who loved thee, shall not wrong

Thy fame, when these have left thee with thy peers
Nor of thy spirit be misunderstood
That bring thee my Love's gift of song and tears—
I give my best, and each heart's best is good.

*From Living Age, 198-770; published with permission
of editor.*

BROWNING

BY C. E. D. PHELPS

A THOUGHT-BOW which the world-string scarce can pull;
A hand too heavy for the instrument;
A gold that needs alloy ere it be sent
To mint or graver; verse of faults as full
As is the gem of facets; myriad lights
There sparkle, none converge; gigantic wings,
With feet unfit for homely travellings:
They can but perch on Himalaya-heights.
Ears may be dull or low, he never seeks
To reach them stooping, as another man.
They rise who hear him; he hath proved he can
Be understood of Babel-host:
And who shall blame the poet if he speaks
His own peculiar language more than most?

*From Poet Lore, Vol. 5, p. 288; published with permis-
sion of the editor.*

Page Fifty-eight

BROWNING

BY CARA E. WHITON-STONE

Oh, English Mother of that flame-crowned race,
High priests of Song, who nurtured on thy breast
Live on immortal.—Browning with the rest,
Proud of thine ownership lift up thy face
His birthday on Time's shining page to trace,
Whose song, like thunder of the heavens, has passed
Magnificently onward East and West.
Till in Fame's citadel it has found place.
Fitting his advent to the world of men
The nightingales should chorus near and far
Who into Epics sang them back again,
Enrapturing Springs that ages cannot mar,
And set thy heavens to music with a pen
Dipt in the flooding splendour of a star.

*From the Boston Browning Society, 1909-1910, p. 24;
published with permission of the Society.*

TO ROBERT BROWNING
ON RE-READING SOME POEMS LONG
UNREAD

BY E. DICKINSON WEST

Friend, "strong since joyful"—guide upon the heights
Of life's best blessedness and life's best pain—
Awhile I left thee. Now I come again,
Urged by the vigor lent of old, which fights
Within my soul, and there makes good its rights
Over the sloths and langours of the plain.
Lead me! I, if I follow thee, am sane
From sad-sick dreams and lotus-flower delights
That o'er the indolence of heart's despair
Shed charm of Art. Thy nobler Art doth cope
With doubts and ills. And they who with thee dare
Thought's strenuous climb on rugged mountain slope,
Find vision purged, like thine, by that keen air,
To catch dear glimpses of a far-off hope.

Aug. 30, 1881. From Academy, Dec. 17, 1881, p. 454.

HOMAGE TO

TO ROBERT BROWNING

BY EDMUND GOSSE

As young Greek athletes hung their votive strigils
Within the temples of the Powers above;
As lovers gave the lamp that lit their vigils
Through sleepless hours of love;

So I this lyric symbol of my labour,
This antique light that led my dreams so long,
This battered hull of a barbaric tabor,
Beaten to runic song,

Bear to that shrine where your dear presence lingers,
Where stands your Muse's statue white as snow;
I take my poor gift in my trembling fingers,
And hang it there and go.

This very day one hundred years are over
Since Landor's godlike spirit came to earth;
Surely the winter air laughed like a lover,
The hour that gave him birth.

Ah! had he lived to hear our hearts' emotion,
What lyric love had strewn his path today!
Yourself had sung; and Swinburne's rapt devotion
Had cleft its sunward way;

And I too, though unknown and unregarded,
Had thrown my violets where you threw your bays,
Had seen my garland, also, not discarded,
Had gloried all my days!

But since the world his august spirit haunted
Detains him here no more, but mourns him dead,
And other chaplets, in strange airs enchanted,
Girdle his sacred head,

Take thou my small oblation, yea! receive it!
Laid at thy feet, within thy shrine it stands!
I brought it from my heart, and here I leave it.
The work of reverent hands.

January 30, 1875.

Page Sixty

ESSAY ON ROBERT BROWNING, DEC. 1886

BY W. G. KINGSLAND

O strong-soul'd singer of higher themes and wide—
Thrice noble in thy work and life alike—
Thy genius glides upon a sea, whose tide
Heaves with a pain and passion infinite!

Men's hearts laid bare beneath thy pitying touch;
Strong words that comfort all o'erwearied much;
Thoughts whose calm cadence moulds our spirit-life,
Gives strength to bravely bear amid world-strife;
And one large hope, full orb'd as summer sun,
That souls shall surely meet when LIFE is won!

So round thy heart our grateful thanks entwine;
Men are the better for these songs of thine!
At eve thy muse doth o'er us mellowed swell,
Strong with the strength of life lived long and well.

From Browning Society Papers, Part 11, p. 399.

ROBERT BROWNING

BY BERTHA LAFFAN

He stands like some tall monarch of the hills
About whose feet the hamlets clustering spread
In valleys daily ringing with the tread
Of labour, and the unresting whirr of mills—
Above, the air is vocal with the trills
Of woodland birds, and tree tops overhead
Weave the green curtains of Titania's bed
Lapped in the murmur of a thousand rills—
Then upward, sheer, a sudden rock-face grows
Rugged and rent, and cleft with lightning scars,
Or furrowed with the glacier's travail throes.
But far beyond the roughness and the jars
Of warring forces, rise the virgin snows
Up to the silence of the eternal stars!

From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 96.

ROBERT BROWNING

BY HARRIET ADAMS SAWYER

That soul of thine, thou peerless bard immortal,
Is like unto the bounteous, soundless sea—
Upon its shores a few bright shells we gather,
In ocean-bed some pearls are found to be;
But, who could tell the gems thy depths have treasured?
Who, understand the sources whence they spring?
We only know those depths could not be measured,—
Our best powers falter, when of thee we sing.
O, mortal, with a god-like insight dealing
With men, and women walking earthly ways,
How learned you pathways into all hearts stealing?
What tuned your song for hymning human lays?
And, too, we dimly see thy likeness peering
Through night's celestial canopy above,
We know and name some of its constellations
Our souls read mystic messages of Love.
But, when strained ears have listened to their story,
Our inner light reveals far more than they,—
We know well that we know not half the glory
The heavens declare. We hearken—we obey:
So, will we seek thy message to remember;—
To see divinity through weakness shine,
To know that man at length in joy must waken
In image of his Maker—all divine.

*From the Boston Browning Society, 1909-1910, p. 22;
published with permission of the society.*

THE TWO FELICITIES

*(Appended to the Pompilia Monologue of
'The Ring and the Book')*

BY WILLIAM WATSON

'Tis human fortune's happiest heights to be
A spirit melodious, lucid, poised, and whole;
Second in order of felicity
I hold it, to have walked with such a soul.

BY CHARLES B. WRIGHT

A goodly truth, and goodliest here to write,
In the pure ether of each happy height;
The first felicity Pompilia's dower,
And ours the other by a poet's power.

From Poet Lore, Vol. 9, p. 472; with permission.

Page Sixty-two

BROWNING'S LINEAGE

BY HENRY VAN DYKE

How blind the toil that burrows like the mole,
In winding graveyard pathways underground,
For Browning's lineage! What if men have found
Poor footmen or rich merchants on the roll
Of his forbears? Did they beget his soul?
Nay, for he came of ancestry renowned
In poesy through all the world, and crowned
With fadeless light that shines from pole to pole.

The blazons on his poet's shield are these:
The flaming sign of Shelley's heart on fire,
The golden globe of Shakespeare's human stage,
The staff and scrip of Chaucer's pilgrimage,
The rose of Dante's deep, divine desire,
The tragic mask of wise Euripides.

*From the Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 99, No. 2, p. 260;
published with the permission of the author.*

BROWNING SAID OF THE "THE RING AND
THE BOOK:"

"It lives, if precious be the soul of man to man."

BY RUTH BALDWIN CHENERY

O thou Great Soul, with what a joyous beat
The heart still throbs at thine exultant cry,
For thou art not of those that would deny
To Genius, even thine own, largest meet;
It was not thine to taste the lulling sweet
Of early praise; for long did men decry
The greatness of thy powers, but for reply,
At last, Fame cast her laurels at thy feet.
"If precious be the soul of man to man,
It lives"; what though the centuries forget
It's crowding details as the English plod
Forever forward in Heaven's unknown plan:
"It lives"; its truth shall be immortal yet,
If precious be the soul of man to God.

*From "At Vesper Time," p. 53; with permission of the
author.*

HOMAGE TO

IN A COPY OF BROWNING

BY BLISS CARMAN

Browning, old fellow, your leaves grow yellow,
Beginning to mellow as seasons pass.
Your cover is wrinkled and stained and sprinkled,
And warped and crinkled from sleep on the grass.

Is it a wine stain or only a pine stain,
That makes such a fine stain on your dull blue—
Got as we numbered the clouds that lumbered
Southward and slumbered when day was through?

What is the dear mark there like an ear mark?
Only a tear mark a woman let fall,
As, bending over, she bade me discover,
"Who *plays* the lover, he loses all!"

With you for teacher we learned love's feature
In every creature that roves or grieves;
When the winds were brawling, or bird-folk calling
Or leaf-folk falling about our eaves.

No law must straiten the ways they wait in,
Whose spirits greaten and hearts aspire.
The world may dwindle, and summer brindle,
So love but kindle the soul to fire.

Here many a red line, or penciled headline,
Shows love could wed line to perfect sense;
And something better than wisdom's fetter
Has made your letter dense to the dense.

You made us farers and equal sharers
With homespun-wearers in home-made joys;
You made us princes no plea convinces
That spirit winces at dust and noise.

When Fate was nagging, and days were dragging,
And fancy lagging, you gave it scope,
When eaves were drippy, and pavements slippery,
From Lippo Lippi to Evelyn Hope.

When winter's arrow pierced to the marrow,
And thought was narrow, you gave it room;
We guessed the warder on Roland's border,
And helped to order the Bishop's Tomb.

When winds were harshish, and ways were marshish,
We found with Karshish escape at need;
Were bold with Waring in far seafaring,
And strong in sharing Ben Ezra's creed.

We felt dark menace of lovers pen us,
Afloat in Venice, devising fibs;
And little mattered the rain that pattered,
While Blougram chattered to Gigadibs.

And we too waited with heart elated
And breathing bated, for Pippa's song;—
Saw Satan hover with wings to cover
Porphyria's lover, Pompilia's wrong.

Long thoughts were started, when youth departed
From the half-hearted Riccardi's bride;
For, saith your fable, great Love is able
To slip the cable and take the tide.

Or truth compels us with Paracelsus,
Till nothing else is of worth at all,
Del Sarto's vision is our own mission,
And art's ambition is God's own call.

Through all the seasons, you gave us reasons
For splendid treasons to doubt and fear;
Bade no foot falter, though weaklings palter,
And friendships alter, from year to year.

Since first I sought you, found you and brought you,
Hugged you and brought you home from Cornhill,
While some upbraid you, and some parade you,
Nine years have made you my master still.

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THE WOMEN OF BROWNING

BY SIVORI LEVEY

The Ghosts of Browning's Women pass before my dream-
ing sight,—

Pauline, the Soul's Confessor; and with songs of heart's
delight

Young Pippa passes;

Now Ottima and Phene take their shape within my mind,
And the friend of Paracelsus, faithful Michal;—just
behind

Some laughing lasses;

And Evelyn Hope, the golden-haired; Count Gismond's
bride from France;

Porphyria fair (her neck entwined) with ever-trustful
glance,

And My Last Duchess;

Domizia, and Eulalia, with all their doubts dispelled;
And James Lee's lonely, melancholy wife whose heart
is held

In Sorrow's clutches;

Artemis, classic goddess; and the sweet Balaustion now
Approaches with the wreath of Athens' favours on her
brow;

Then Klutemnaistra;

Anael; Mildred Tresham; Violante—still distressed—
And the Spirit of Pompilia comes her baby at her breast,

No foes to pester her;

Madame Riel, the Belle Aurore; the Gipsy-Soul, Fifine;
Then one in gorgeous Eastern robes, 'tis Balkis, Sheba's
Queen,

So wise and placid;

Colombe; then Kate from Cyprus; the Riccardi's bride
comes too;

Dove-like, the dainty Duchess, and the Yellow Duchess,
who

Looks grim and acid!

HOMAGE TO

The Faultless Painter's wayward wife; Court Ladies,
one, two, three,
Good Wives and Bad Wives, high and low, from France
and Italy,
 With husband, lover,—
The Queen and Constance, Beatrice, and Christina,—
still they come
With others, see, from Florence, and from Venice, and
from Rome
 My dream is over.

*From the Journal of the Robert Browning Guild—Vol.
I, No. 1, (1914), p. 20; published with permission
of the author.*

SONNET ON BROWNING'S MASTERPIECE "THE RING AND THE BOOK"

BY RUTH BALDWIN CHENERY

O Ring, no slender, narrow circlet, thou!
Enwrought thou liest firm and massive there,
Welded of virgin gold; some craftsman rare
Enrich thee thus, mayhap for marriage vow.

Old Yellow Book, the centuries allow
A thousand readers, and but one aware
Thou hadst a soul; when in that Florence square
*The wind of inspiration swept his brow:

Behold, O ye the Poet's voice awakes,
Another Ring, from gold was never mined,
To guard his singer's "golden verse" he said;

Another Book, which tells that morning breaks,
With Phosphor-star of Truth, for humankind;
This Ring and Book, forever shall be wed.

*"*A spirit laughs and leaps through every limb,
And lights my eye, and lifts me by the hair.*"

*From "At Vesper Time," p. 52; with permission of the
author.*

HOMAGE TO

AN ODE FOR THE CENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF ROBERT BROWNING

BY GEORGE STERLING

As unto lighter strains a boy might turn
From where great altars burn
And Music's grave archangels tread the night,
So I, in seasons past,
Loved not the bitter might
And merciless control
Of thy bleak trumpets calling to the soul.
Their consummating blast
Held inspirations of affright,
As when a faun
Hears mournful thunders roll
On breathless, wide transparencies of dawn.
Nor would I hear
With thee, superb and clear
The indomitable laughter of the race;
Nor would I face
Clean truth, with her cold agates of the well,
Nor with thee trace
Her footprints passing upward to the snows,
But sought a phantom rose
And islands where the ghostly siren sings;
Nor would I dwell
Where star-forsaking wings
On mortal thresholds hide their mystery,
Nor watch with thee
The light of heaven cast on common things.

But now in dreams of day I see thee stand
A grey, great sentry on the encompassed wall
That fronts the Night forever, in thy hand
A consecrated spear
To test the dragons of man's ancient fear
From secret gulfs that crawl—
A captain of that choral band
Whose reverend faces, anxious of the Dark,
Yet undismayed
By rain of ruined worlds against the night,
Turned evermore to hark
The music of God's silence, and were stayed
By something other than the reason's light.

And I have seen thee as
An eagle, strong to pass
Where tempest-shapen clouds go to and fro
And winds and noons have birth,
But whose regard is on the lands below
And wingless things of earth.
And yet not thine for long
The feignèd passion of the nightingale,
Nor shards of haliotis, nor the song
Of cymballed fountains hidden in the dale,
Nor gardens where the feet of Fragrance steal:
'Twas thine the laying-on to feel
Of tragic hands imperious and cold,
That, grasping, led thee from the dreams of old,
Making thee voyager
Of seas within the cosmic solitude,
Whose moons the long-familiar stars occlude—
Whose living sunsets stir
With visions of the timelessness we crave.
And thou didst ride a wave
That gathered solemn music to its breast,
And, breaking, shook our strand with thought's unrest,
Till men far inland heard its mighty call
Where the young mornings vault the world's blue wall.
Nature hath lonely voices at her heart
And some thou heardest, for at thine own
Were chords beyond all Art
That stir but to the eternal undertone.
But not necessitous to thee
The dreams that were when Arcady began
Or Paphos soared in iris from the sea;
For thou couldst guess
The rainbows hidden in the frustrate slime,
And saw'st in crownless Man
A Titan scourged through Time
With pains and raptures of his loneliness.
And thou wast wanderer
In that dim House that is the human heart,
Where thou didst roam apart,
Seeing what pillars were
Between its deep foundations and the sun,
What halls of dream undone,
What seraphs hold compassionate their wings
Before the youth and bitterness of things
Ere all see clear
The gain in loss, the triumph in the tear.

Time's whitest loves lie radiant in thy song,
Like starlight on an ocean, for thine own
Was as a deathless lily grown
In Paradise—ethereal and strong.
And to thine eyes
Earth had no earth that held not haughty dust,
And seeds of future harvestings in trust,
And hidden azures of eventual skies.
Yet hadst thou sharper strains,
Even as the Power determines us with pains,
And, seeing harvests, saw'st as well the chaff,
And, seeing Beauty, saw'st her shames no less,
Loosing the sweet,
High thunder of thy Jovian laugh
On souls purblind in their self-righteousness.
O vision wide and keen!
Which knew, untaught, that pains to joyance are
As night unto the star
That on the effacing dawn must burn unseen.
And thou didst know what meat
Was torn to give us milk,
What countless worms made possible the silk
That robes the mind, what plan
Drew as a bubble from old infamies
And fen-pools of the past
The shy and many-colored soul of man.
Yea! thou hast seen the lees
In that rich cup we lift against the day,
Seen the man-child at his disastrous play—
His shafts without a mark,
His fountains flowing downward to the dark,
His maiming and his bars,
Then turned to see
His vatic shadow cast athwart the stars,
And his strange challenge to infinity.

But who am I to speak,
Far down the mountain, of its altar-peak,
Or cross on feeble wings,
Adventurous, the oceans in thy mind?
We of a wider day's bewilderings
For very light seem blind,
And fearful of the gods our hands have formed.
Some lift their eyes and seem
To see at last the lofty human scheme
Fading and toppling as a sunset stormed

By wind and evening, with the stars in doubt.
 And some cry, *On to Brotherhood!* And some,
 (Their Dream's high music dumb)
Nay! let us hide in roses all our chains,
Tho' all the lamps go out!
Let us accept our lords!
Time's tensions move not save to subtler pains!
 And over all the Silence is as swords . . .
 Wherefore be near us in our day of choice,
 Lest Hell's red choirs rejoice;
 And may our counsels be
 More wise, more kindly, for the thought of thee;
 And may our deeds attest
 Thy covenant of fame
 To men of after-years that see thy name
 Held like a flower by Honor to her breast.
 Thy station in our hearts long since was won—
 Safe from the jealous years—
 Thou of whose love, thou of whose thews and tears
 We rest most certain when the day is done
 And formless shadows close upon the sun!
 Thou wast a star ere death's long night shut down,
 And for thy brows the crown
 Was graven ere the birth-pangs, and thy bed
 Is now of hallowed marble, and a fane
 Among the mightier dead:
 More blameless than thine own what soul hath stood!
 Dost thou lie deaf until another Reign,
 Or hear as music o'er thy head
 The ceaseless trumpets of the war for Good?
 Ah, thou! ah, thou!
 Stills God thy question now?

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A FAREWELL

A Translation

BY HENRY TRANTHAM

Not a fretful tear shall fall for thee in parting,
 Now that thou hast made thy race;
 For such a song of triumph hast thou left us
 As one who goes to greet a loving master face to face.

Page Seventy-one

TO BROWNING THE MUSIC-MASTER

BY ROBERT HAVEN SCHAUFFLER

O I once was a lad
Of a single thought,
Melody-mad,
With ears for naught
But the miracles Bach and Beethoven wrought,
When suddenly you—
Out of the blue—
With the crabbèd old master Galuppi, dropped,
And grim-eyed Hugues
Of the mountainous fugues,
And the rampired walls of the marvelous Abt,—
To fashion me straight from Tone's far strand
A way to a humaner, dearer shore,—
A bridge to poetry-land.

Then to my soul I swore:
'If poets may win such store
Of music's own highland air,
Yet abide in the common round,
Transmuting man's dusty ground
To gems for the world to wear,—
Theirs, too, is a precious art,
Is a thing that I fain would share,—
A thing that is near to my heart!

Thus were a young soul's ears unstopped
By Galuppi and Hugues and the marvelous Abt,
Who bridged a way for ignorant feet,
And parted wide for wondering eyes
The port of a second paradise;
Showing how right it is, and meet
That a Schubert's voice may never repeat
'What a Shakespeare's lips once solemnize;—
That music waxes where poesy wanes,
And, with thirsty lips to poesy's veins,
Grows by her want, by her wasting, gains.

For the protean art is this, and this!
The rainbow shimmer of love's young bliss,
A gesture despairing, a dream-like whim,
The down on the plumes of the cherubim,

The body of Ariel, lissome and fresh,
Too subtle for poesy's golden mesh,
An exquisite, evanescent shape
That 'breaks through language' to escape
To the bourne of that country, brighter, vaster,
Where now you are singing, dear Music-Master.

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"NOTHING BUT A POET"*

BY W. C. GANNETT

"Nothing but a poet,"—so he said, and wondered
At the sole persistence of his years.
Laughing world, you'll know it, now that, silence-sun-
dered,
He is in the welcome of his peers.

What said Milton to him, what said Keats and Shakspeare?
Oh, to see the smile on Dante's face!
Catch the great Greek "Chaire", hear the "bronze throat"
hail him,
"Browning's come among us,—give him place!"

"Nothing but a poet,"—singing songs of soul-growth,
Splendor in the pain-throb, rise in fall,
"Saul the failure" in us re-creating kingly,—
Songs one surge of morning;—that was all!

Camberwell
May 7, 1812

Venice
December 12, 1889

**Written for the Browning Memorial Meeting in Recital
Hall, Auditorium Building, Chicago, Feb. 27, 1890.*

THE SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

BY NEETA MARQUIS

Coined from the treasure of a woman's heart,
For him whose love had crowned her with delight,
Uplifting her by force of its pure might
From solitary ways, where Joy, apart
From her pale sister Sorrow, was not known;—
Rare aureate words graved with the High Queen's face,
Still current in true-love's exchanging place,
And with much using but the brighter grown!

O poetry of life! O blessèd quill
That fixed such golden thoughts! Their messages,
Imbued with passion delicate and strong,
Are love's most lovely fashioning in song,
Conveying through the spirit's finer thrill
The pressure of her human lips on his.

"CHILDE ROLAND"

BY HUMPHREYS PARK

You set the slug-horn to your lips and blew,
And after—what came after? Did it fade,
The round squat turret, and some deeper shade
Of evening drench to blackness the curst view?
Or did some sinister strange thing, some rue
Of shape unspeakable, come forth, that made
You fetch quick breath, and grasp the loose-slung blade,
And pray at last your soul prove not untrue?

That there was fight there, taunting face to face,
Hell's hatred matched against one proud soul's scorn,
We guess, but not how went the fight's disgrace
Yet, to our fancy is the wonder borne
That you came forth unscathed, and left the place
A-ring with the shrill mocking of your horn.

From Appleton's.

ROBERT BROWNING

BROWNING

BY THEO STONE

Oh England, mother of that flame-crowned race,
High priests of song, who nurtured on thy breast
Live on Immortal,—Browning with the rest,
Proud of thine ownership lift up thy face
His birthday on Time's shining page to trace,
Whose song, like thunder of the heavens, has pressed
Magnificently onward East and West
Till in Fame's citadel it has found place.
Fitting his advent to the world of men
The nightingales should chorus near and far
Who into Epics sang them back again,
Enrapturing springs that ages cannot mar;
And set thy heavens to music, with a pen
Dipt in the flooding splendor of a star.

TO ROBERT BROWNING

BY MABEL BARNETT GATES

Thou poet lover of humanity,
Cause us to see through thy illumined sight
The heart of e'en the lowest of our kind
And with a pitying smile, like God, forgiveness find.

Inspire us with the glory of a soul
Of one of God's highest. May we respond
With aspiration high and noble longing
To thoughts exalted that to our hearts come thronging.

May we, through thy heart's truest alchemy,
Transmute each base thing into gold so bright
That evil fades in the effulgent glow
And naught but good endures through centuries slow.

May thy clear vision reveal to our dull sense
Ultimate Truth and Beauty that are our goal.

THE GIRL WITH THE BLUE EYES

*To Miss Sarah LeMoyne Cowell, to Whom Browning
Gave This Name.*

BY ANNA CATHERINE MARKHAM

Venice and Browning, youth and you—
You with his sister's and his mother's name,
And he took note of that vivid blue
Alive in your eyes, that noon-sky flame,
Like the turquoise blaze—the azure royal,
Quick in the drift-wood fire aglow;
And put report of that sapphire shining,
Nemophila, gentian, lupin, ablow,
Off (who knows) with spoils of far and near—
Your eyes, and Evelyn's red young mouth,
Yes, and Fifine's rose-petal ear,
And the spirit-brow of her in the South—
All heaped in some magical, secret place,
Trick and turn, and light and shade,—
Memories hoarded and brooded to build
Those myriad-mooded, wild-word women he made.

BROWNING AND SHELLEY

By E. D. W.*

Strong poet soul, thou yearnest to thy friend
That other poet soul elect by thee
For worship in that deep affinity
Wherein two human natures seek to blend,
And set their opposite forces to one end.
It had been surely good for earth if he,
While dwelling in that flesh thou ne'er didst see,
Had in his need had help thy strength could lend,
(Help better far than that wild deaf "west wind"
Whereto in loneliness went out his cry
That meant a seeking for his God unknown—)
Good will it be for heaven when thou shalt find
Thy Shelley there,—and two souls, drawing nigh,
Perfect together things each wrought alone.

August, 1872.

**E. D. W. (Elizabeth Dickinson West) is now
Mrs. Edward Dowden of Dublin.*

Page Seventy-six

ROBERT BROWNING

BY FRANCES WHITMARSH WILE

You bid me pledge a poet in the fruitage of the vine:
I give you one whose music is the vigor of your wine,
The charging blast of bugles when the standards are
unfurled,

The air from hill-tops bearing a new life along the world;
Whose lyric lilts of passion are the breath of roses blown,
Whose gospel recreates the heart wherein its light hath
shone.

His men and women, summoned from the mists of long
ago,

Lay bare before our vision heights and deeps of joy and
woe:

Abt Vogler builds his palace, and young Pippa, passing,
sings,

Euripides is chanting, and the harp of David rings:

Where lost ones lie in Paris on Setebos' magic isle,

He sees, through death and darkness, Love's illuminating
smile.

One thread binds all the dramas and the stories that are
told,

One thread is always throbbing through the music mani-
fold:

The Soul of Man aspiring, and the striving to attain,
The failure proving triumph, and the growth that comes
by pain;

Supreme and crucial moments that are earth's divining
wand,

The finite's deathless yearning toward the Infinite beyond.

No sigh of resignation and no wailing of despair,
But splendid affirmation of the worth of life is there.
He breasts the fate that baffles while he pours in eager
strains

His faith the Love shall conquer, that the Lord forever
reigns.

To the man of full assurance, of a jubilation divine,

To the Master, Robert Browning, do I pledge this cup
of mine.

HOMAGE TO

ROBERT BROWNING

BY AUBREY DE VERE

Mourn, Italy, with England mourn, for both
He sang with song's discriminating love,
Thy towers that flash the wooded crag above;
Thy trellised vineyard's purple overgrowth;
Thy matin balm; thy noontide's pleasing sloth;
Thy convent bell, dim lake, and homeward dove;
Thine evening star, that through the bowered alcove
Silvers the white flight of the circling moth.
He sang thy best and worst—false love, fierce war,
Renaissance craft, child graces, saintly art.
Old poms from "Casa Guidi Windows" seen.
There dwelt he happy; there that minstrel queen,
Who shared his poet crown but gladdened more
To hold, unshared, her poet's manly heart.

From the Dedication of

THE WANDERER

BY OWEN MEREDITH

24.

"And, citing all he said or sung
With praise reserved for bards like him,
Spake of that friend who dwells among
The Apennine, and there hath strung
A harp of Anakim;

25.

"Than whom a mightier master never
Touch'd the deep chords of hidden things;
Nor error did from truth dis sever
With keener glance; nor made endeavour
To rise on bolder wings

26.

"In those high regions of the soul
Where Thought itself grows dim with awe."

From Browning Society Papers, Part 2, p. 146.

HOMAGE TO

THE TIME AND THE PLACE

BY BLISS CARMAN

"Never the time and the place
And the loved one all together!"
Ah, Browning, that does to tell!
But I have an eagle feather
Hid in my waistcoat too.

Yes, once in the wild June weather,
In God's own North befell
The joy not time shall undo
Nor the storm of years efface.

Ah, Master Browning, you hear?
If over the time and the place
With aught of thy mood concur,
Far off in my golden year,
The solstice of my prime,
Youth done, age not begun,
The moment that soul is ripe
For the little touch of rhyme,
Then hearken! If there but stir
One breath of the Spirit of earth
Through me his frail reed pipe,
(As the hermit-thrush
Rehearses the scene when the joy of the world
 had birth,
So sure, so fine,
Disturbing the hush,)
You shall hearken, and hear
Take rapture and sense and form in one perfect
 line
A golden lyric of Her!

From The Month, January, 1897.

IN A COPY OF "AGAMEMNON LA SAISIAZ AND DRAMATIC IDYLS"

BY B. P. SHILLABER (MRS. PARTINGTON)

A merry Christmas I send with this,
Though it seems absurdity crowning
To wish for cachinatory bliss
Over the works of Browning.

From The Brownings and America, p. 44.

BROWNING SOCIETY

BY GEORGE JAY SMITH

Says the wise old maxim, a man is known
By his company; then of a poet
As truly we say that his creatures alone,
That are born of his soul, can show it.

Touched by this stone, how much pure gold
Spring forth from the dross, and shimmers?
In poems today as in those of old,
All is not gold that glimmers!

Can a man *create*, can he bring to birth
Live humans, hearts a-beating,
As Shakspeare gave to this gray dull earth
Orlando and Rosalind meeting?—

Or as Meredith summoned for our delight
Young Richard and Lucy—Diana—
The knowing of whom feeds the soul with the white
And sweet of a heaven-sent manna?

Many sing of nature, and some
Of art: but few are the singers
Who picture us human life. . . . such come
To the world as the manna-bringers.

How secure in the rank of these he stays
Whom the dear British public would none of—
That “Robert Browning, maker of plays”—
What a high small group he’s one of!

For tried by the test of humanness,
And of art that’s divinely creative,
How clear he emerges above the press
Of singers less strong, less native!

There was scanned by his mind the roll of the race
In the shining vista of history,
And all that he touched re-lives in its place,
Revealed, and pluckt of its mystery.

He ranged through Greece, Arabia, Rome,
Read the rich romance of the ages
That rise to the Renaissance, and the tome
Of his own Day’s crowded pages.

And all that life of his fellowmen,
As light many-hued through a prism,
Passed through his soul and glowed again,
Renewed in the poet's chrism.

He let speak Adam and Lilith and Eve,
Voiced Solomon's, Sheba's, yearning,
Made the song of David's harp relieve
The lone king Saul of his burning:

He entered the heart of Euripides,
Englished the Aeschylan drama,
Apologized Aristophanes,—
Unrolled the Greek panorama:

Gave us Ferishtah, the Persian wise,
Rabbi Ben Ezra, and Cleon,
Let old Paracelsus our blindness advise
How past earth's mists we may see on:

Told the tale of the Piper, or Hervè Riel,
Of Lippo, of ill-starred Porphyria,
Of the Bishop who ordered his tomb so well—
Fit story for "Jocoseria":

Delved to the depths of Caliban's mire,
Heard Sludge the medium's droning,
Let light Galuppi re-tune his lyre,
Abt Vogler his organ's toning:

Parleyed with Dodington, Christopher Smart,
And Clive, the empire-builder,
Made Blougram bare his episcopal heart,
Sordello our brains bewilder:

But O, how he rose to our keenest demand—
The test of art highest-human—
By proving that he could understand,
Reveal, create for us, woman—

How shine in a galaxy rich of scope,
Enshrined in our memorabilia,
Pippa, and Colombe, and Evelyn Hope,
And the passionate proud Pompilia,

That sad smiling Duchess we know as "My Last",
And she whom James Lee wedded,
Sweet Mildred Tresham whom death seized fast,
And that Countess whom Gismond besteded.

But enough! What need call the roll of more names!
They are part of our lives, our being.
And Robert Browning our heart acclaims
As the maker, the poet, true-seeing.

The scope of the human was his to reveal,
Whether base or of noblest station;
How men and women live, think, feel,
He tells—that is true creation!

If a man is known by his company, then—
The maxim admits no dubiety—
These creatures of Browning's, women and men,
Form the real Browning Society!

CALIBAN IN THE COAL MINES

BY LOUIS UNTERMAYER

God, we don't like to complain,
We know that the mines are no lark,
But—there's the pools from the rain,
But—there's the cold and the dark.

God, you don't know what it is,
You, in Your well-lighted sky,
Watching a meteor whizz—
Warm, with the sun always by.

God, if You had but the moon
Stuck in Your cap for a lamp,
Even You'd tire of it soon
Down in the dark and the damps . . .

Nothing but blackness above,
And nothing that moves but the cars—
God, in return for our love,
Fling us a handful of stars!

Published with permission of author.

ROBERT BROWNING

TO MRS. THOMAS B. STOWELL AND
MRS. SIDNEY J. PARSONS

From the Browning Department of Ebell, 1914-1918

BY BLANCHE COLES

Through four delightful years, with tender care,
Your labors have wrought out a friendship ring
Of purest gold, bestudded 'round with rare
Pearls of thought from the eternal spring
Our poet found. The circle now is done;
The gold is left in its intrinsic worth—
For all the dross of common thought is gone—
And lo! the forged, flashing truth flames forth:
Our need to hold eternal things was great,
And in our strait a loving God has given—
While maelstroms lure the world to gloom and hate—
This golden link to bind us fast to heaven.
So now we proffer parting words 'mid tears,
And may their spirit gladden coming years.

SORDELLO

BY SANDA ENOS

Within the sea of Poesy doth lie
An isle that sheerly doth uplift a brow
As rough and uninviting, I avow,
As any mariner has chanced to spy.
With such forbidding looks it greets the eye
That many who the waves for pleasure plough,
For smiling lands beyond, keep straight the prow
And with indifferent glances pass it by.

'Tis called Sordello. If you boldly thread
Its thickets, well you will rewarded be;
For many an emerald glade you will behold,
And many a crystal stream with sands of gold,
And you will hear from strange birds overhead
Full many a burst of deathless melody.

*From Browning Society Papers, Part 8, p. 147; in the
Current, Chicago, February 20, 1886.*

HOMAGE TO

"JOCOSERIA"

BY RICHARD WATSON GILDER

Men grow old before their time,
With the journey half before them:
In languid rhyme
They deplore them.

Life up-gathers carks and cares,
So goodbye to maid and lover!
Find three gray hairs,
And cry, "All's over!"

Look at Browning! How he keeps
In the seventies still a heart
That never sleeps,—
Still an art

Full of youth's own grit and power,
Thoughts we deemed to boys belonging,—
The Springtime's flower
Love-and-longing.

*Published with the kind permission of the Century
Company and of Houghton Mifflin Company.*

DJABAL'S SONG

BY CHARLOTTE PORTER

And am I not Hakeem, though man?
Needs it a God to plot and plan
And pour his heart and brain and soul
Through lonely patient scheming years, intent
By small slow conquests to control
And bring to birth, at last, the purpose meant?
Is it no marvel earth-like stuff
Compacts a sun night's blackness to rebuff?
A man who leads is miracle enough!

*Taken from—Lips of Music, p. 115; published with the
permission of the author.*

AT FANO

To Robert Browning

BY RENNELL RODD

Dearly honored, great dead poet, still as living speak
to me!

This is Fano, world-forgotten little Fano by the sea:

I have come to see that angel which Guercino dreamed
and drew,

Since whate'er you loved and honored I would hold in
honor too.

Like some sea-bird's nest the township clusters in its
rampart wall,—

Such a twilight on the byways, such an autumn over all:

Gloomy streets with silent portals, all the pulse of life
they hide,

Throbbing toward that one piazza where it centres into
pride;

House and palace, as their wont is in these Adriatic ports,
Turn their backs on darkling alleys and their faces on
the courts,

Courts beyond each tunnelled entrance, where through
vaulted arches seen

Glimpses flash of dancing sunlight, jets of fountain,
glint of green.—

Here I found him, ever watchful for the work of love
to do,

That white-winged one whose great glory you interpreted
so true;

Still he folds the little fingers of that kneeling child to
prayer,

On the grave which tells the story why it needs the
angel's care;

Still above the forehead's glory arch the great wings
wide unfurled

As alert to shield and succor all the orphans of the world.

HOMAGE TO

Yet hath he but little honor in his home at Fano there
O'er the cold neglected altar in the chapel blanced and
bare;

Few come here to read his message in the little nest of
towers,—

Few that worship where he watches, none that deck his
shrine with flowers.

Thence I passed out on the ramparts, high above the
olive trees,

Skirting roofs and shadowy belfries, overlooking evening
seas.

Into such a rose of sunset, such a tender twilight hue
Where the orange sails came homeward on the Adriatic
blue;

Oh, my poet, had you seen it, you had found the word
to fit

That sweet world of peace at even with God's love
unfolding it!

There across the rose of sunset, through the perfect hush
of things

Stole a gentle rhythmic motion that might be the beat
of wings.—

Art thou free at last, dear angel, art thou free to fly
above,

Leave that little one to slumber, quit the duty which is
love,

Through the chiming Ave Mary spread those bird wings
white as snow,

Whether starwards, whether sunwards, be the way their
angels go?

One more service yet, dear angel, find him there beyond
the blue,

Tell him how I loved the message he interpreted so true!

*From Volume 40 of the "Critic." Published with the
permission of the editor.*

BROWNING AT ASOLO

BY ROBERT UNDERWOOD JOHNSON

This is the loggia Browning loved,
High on the flank of the friendly town;
These are the hills that his keen eye roved,
The green like a cataract leaping down
To the plain that his pen gave new renown.

There to the West what a range of blue!—
The very background Titian drew
To his peerless Loves. O tranquil scene!
Who than thy poet fondlier knew
The peaks and the shore and the lore between?

See! yonder's his Venice,—the valiant Spire,
Highest one of the perfect three,
Guarding the others; the Palace Choir,
The Temple flashing with opal fire,—
Bubble and foam of the sunlit sea.

Yesterday he was part of it all,—
Sat here, discerning cloud from snow
In the flush of the Alpine afterglow,
Or mused on the vineyard whose wine-stirred row
Meets in leafy bacchanal.

Listen a moment—how oft did he!—
To the bells from Fontalto's distant tower
Leading the evening in . . . ah, me!
Here breathes the whole soul of Italy,
As one rose breathes with the breath of the bower.

Sighs were meant for an hour like this
When joy is keen as a thrust of pain.
Do you wonder the poet's heart would miss
This touch of rapture in Nature's kiss,
And dream of Asolo over again?

"Part of it yesterday" we moan?
Nay, he is part of it now, no fear,
What most we love we are that alone.
His body lies under the minster stone,
But the love of the warm heart lingers here.

*By permission from "Italian Rhapsody and Other Poems
of Italy," published by the author, New York: 347
Madison Ave.*

HOMAGE TO

ON THE BRONZE CLASPED HANDS OF ROBERT AND ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

BY RUTH BALDWIN CHENERY

O, Poet-hands, so closely clasping there
In that mute, shining bronze, that shall outlast
Great centuries to be and, holding fast,
Reveal to stranger eyes a love more fair,
More even-weighted for each heart to share,
Than any classic poet of the past
Has sung to us, in mood however vast,
Teach then, as now, clasped hands, that love is prayer.
And when this bronze in farther ages still,
Lies ruined, low, shattered in golden dust,
Then shall the love it storied forth so long,
Smiling at Death and Time, move to fulfil
Its spacious task, moulding in joyous trust
Sublimar purpose in sublimar song.

From—At Vesper Time, p. 51, with permission of author.

CLASPED HANDS

BY ANNE CLEVELAND CHENEY

Hush! Let us dream awhile now, leaning near
This wonder of two hands laid each in each,
Enduringly, beyond mutation's reach,
As king and queen lie carven on one bier.
Thou fragile hand, thou strong—each deathless dear,
E'en all those living songs, that quickening speech,
Have not more potency to thrill and teach,
Than this ineffably sweet emblem here.

So clasped forever, that the world may know
Such union was, may nevermore forget;
And lovers come as to a shrine and sigh,
'So did their faith endure!' and softlier go;
And poets kneel before these two palms met,
To shrive themselves and pass more purely by.

*Poet Lore, Winter Number, Vol. 17, No. 4. Page No.
102, and published with permission of editors.*

Page Eighty-eight

LEADERSHIP IN SONG

BY WALLACE W. LOVEJOY

Whom as leader shall we name
Worthy of the highest fame?
Dante Virgil took as guide;
They made the journey side by side.
They would the world-of-souls explore,
The guide had been that way before.
Ye who would like journey make
A great-souled poet needs must take.

* * * * *

Browning, when I met with thee,
What to me was poesy?
Jingling rhymes and quaint conceits,
To be measured off by beats.
'Twas my terse and virile thought
That a better judgment taught.
And through the years since then to admit
A few with thee, enranked, to sit—
Whitman, Wordsworth, Meredith,
As masters of poetic pith.
Keats, and Shelley,—earlier born,
Who through darkness sang the dawn.
Their singing robes still on, they passed
To death; and with them, Byron,—last.
In love we name them from their youth
Still hold them to our hearts in ruth.

* * * * *

Though no singing voice awake,
No lofty dream the silence break,
Worship of the Muses cease,
Pandora's direful plagues increase,—
They still speak, the poet-dead.
Reverently their shrines we tread
And through the silence they draw nigh,
The ancient bards of prophecy.
And thy faith, taught from above,
Browning,—with thy 'Lyric Love',
Unveiled the Face that clearer grows—
Our universe that feels and knows.

TAKE HOME HER HEART

BY H. D. RAWNSLEY

(A sonnet written on hearing that Robert Browning's wish to be buried beside his wife in Florence could not be fulfilled, and that, instead, his body was being brought home for sepulture in Westminster Abbey)

I

Take home the heart! her heart that cannot rest
For all Italia's southern-hearted ground,
Take home the heart that fire and fullness found
In that sure heart which still would be its guest.
Take home her heart! the heart that at its best
Was bettered by his singing whose strong sound
Was sweetened by her song, for she was crowned
Queen of a heart that was her King confessed.

Hearts such as these have never ceased their beating,
Hearts such as these by sympathy divine
In dust will palpitate harmonious measure,
And still I hear a spirit-voice entreating
Let Arno give the Thames her poet treasure,
One grave the mortal of immortals shrine!

II

From Rivo Alto's silent palace hall,
From San Michele's wilderness of flowers,
Comes one for rest beneath our Abbey towers
Whose song and soul shall never sleep at all:
The crown of Venice shines above the pall;
A brighter crown thy tireless spirit dowers;
For thy strong heart the weakest heart empowers
To "strive and thrive" fare forward, though we fall.

Singer of resolute Right, with Might for squire,
Might for the morrow's battle, and the Must
Of Truth triumphant with our latest breath,
Lie here; for gentle Spenser can desire
No knightlier guest, nor Chaucer in his dust
A truer harp: Lie here—here comes no death.

*From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 49; published
with permission of author.*

BROWNING'S SHRINE

BY JOHN HOWARD JEWETT

Plain, cloth-bound volumes, fit for homely use—
Brown volumes, with their titles writ in gold,—
Grown sacred now, and hallowed ever more,
The seal of death new stamped across the name!

These front me on the shelves where, side by side,
Great poets of the past assembled wait,
With grand Te Deums for the listening soul
Attuned to strains of beauty, love and truth;
A symphony of throbbing human chords,—
Imprisoned once in clay—poured out in song,
And made perennial, for our starving need,
By swift informing spirit, clothed in speech.
That dies not with the breath.

Recruited ranks

Of grand, immortal names, salute your peer,
Who now has come to join the star-crowned choir!
'Tis Browning, latest from the battle's front,—
Released from earth to share your immortelles,—
Who stands beside you, clad in brown and gold.

* * * * *

But yesterday, a living, loving friend,
Today a phantom, fleeing through the dark,
A poet of the past.

Nay! Nay! forgive

The impotence of rash, misleading words,
Which mock the ear and heart with false alarms.
Thou art not dead, can never die the death
Which locks mortality in voiceless tombs.
No past can claim thee—singer of all time;
No present set its seal upon thy worth.
The legions of the future, thronging past,
Shall halt to catch the harmonies divine,
And hear and know, the voice that dauntless sang
Of love, unblinded by the tears of earth;
Of hope, dispelling clouds of darkest gloom;
Of faith, surviving microscopic tests,
Unshaken by the last analysis
Of problems old or new.

HOMAGE TO

Oh, poet seer,
Who dared all ages' foibles to lay bare;
To probe the wounds of frail humanity,
With firmest touch of skill—yet loved his race;
Its heritage of darkness made his own,
To wrestle with, to conquer, or to share,
Uniting with life's stern philosophy
The brave, triumphant, steadfast song of cheer!

Strong, fearless, tender Browning!—Singing still.
The ages yet to come are thine to bless;
Theirs, to uprear the shrine begun to-day.

From Boston Evening Transcript.

ANAEL'S SONG

BY CHARLOTTE PORTER

I knew thy secret from the first,
When thy heart's fire upon me burst,
With music led me on and on
Through anguish, gropingly to prove the clew,
Till sight and soul in unison
Beheld the Secret from the first I knew.
No triumph with the God be mine!
Hakeem, in Djabal only, I divine—
Love—in that sin-shamed human breast of thine!

*Taken from—Lips of Music, p. 116; published with the
permission of the author.*

TO ROBERT AND ELIZABETH BARRETT
BROWNING

BY MARION PELTON GUILD

I.

O mated souls, that through the blissful deeps
Of heaven on heaven wing your ethereal way,
Know ye how Love on earthly shores to-day
For your true sake his feast in triumph keeps?
Know ye how all the world of lovers heaps
Its garlands on the living words that aye
The holy passion of your vows shall say
Till Song itself to gray oblivion creeps?
The alpha and omega of the heart;
The perfect scale, to its first note returning;
Each fond detail, each jot of life or art,
Touched with the fire upon the altar burning!
While Genius smiles, a happy prisoner, caught
In silver iterance of one sweet thought.

II.

Our modern Muse hath fever in her veins;
Her lips, alas! have known the tainted springs;
We turn afresh to where your fountain flings
Its crystal challenge to all droughts and stains.
Your white ideal, crowned with the truth, remains
Steadfast amid the shock of baser things;
Your love the golden seal of witness brings
To Nature's charter pure, whereto man strains.
Ah, if the mighty quests that now possess you
Permit one pause of earth-revealing sight,
Surely the blessing ye have wrought must bless you,
A keener glow inform the heavenly light,
Some finer echo of our praise must ring
In those infinitudes where Love is king!

From Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 86, pp. 420 and 421; published with permission of editors.

HOMAGE TO

IN THE GARDEN OF THE VATICAN

Dedicated to the New York Browning Society

BY ALICE HARRIMAN

THE GUIDE SPEAKS

Here is the seat whereon His Holiness
Loves best to sit—here by this ilex tree.

Ofttimes I've watched the care-lines smooth away
Whilst he would watch the yellow-banded bees
Sipping the honey from some lily rare;
Or, heavy-legged with the dripping sweet,
Beat throbbingly their gauzy wings in homeward flight.

I've seen the flying shuttle of the loom we call
The mind, pass and repass o'er his features worn,
Carrying the threads of care, of pain, responsibility—
Seldom of peace. Ah, me! How glints it 'gainst the rest!—
And unbeknownst to him I've seen him weep.

I'm old, and hear not well.
Find peace? Does he find peace? God knows.
That comes when one rests full on God—when every
thought is prayer;
So he, as Vicar General of the World, should find
It as the bees find honey in each weed and flower.

Here! Draw you back. He comes.
Bend! Cross yourself!

(My idle clack will penance bring in the confessional!)

S-h-h! Now he's gone. And as I live,
He came to get that book you saw me with as you
passed by.

As I was telling you. His Holiness finds much
To grieve, within, without, the Vatican.
La! La! E'en yesterday I heard (repeat it not from me)
That many do deny infallibility!

But that is neither here nor there to me;
I know my place, nor fret myself of God or man.

About that book? Yes, here's the matter full:
One day it fell, long, long ago,
For I am old, yet 'twas but yesterday it seems,
A gentle man, and grave,

Paced where you pace, questioned, as you, and sighed.
He spoke of Asolo (his very tones breathed love for Italy),
Of some Pope of the past—his name escapes me now—
And said the book he held was one he wrote.

It's name? I know not. Printed words are naught
to me.

And so I asked what he—no Catholic—had put
him down.

I know not how he spoke. 'Twas as an inward flame
Burst into speech as sunset clouds catch fire
From that swift falling ball;
And as he read my very soul was stirred with beauty,
Although the words meant naught to me—

I doubt me an' they do to anyone.

But, here's the strangest thing—I've pondered long
on it.

He left his book, and many times I've seen
His Holiness read and reread that book
(As did the one—God rest his soul—preceding him),
With frowning, brooding brow, until the page is worn.

Mayhap he reads to scorch the lie—if 'tis a lie,
With prayer and credo. You, with your largess
(God's blessing fall on your beneficence)
May know the rights of it—the words mean naught
to me.

(Although I use words as a man of parts, I pick
them up,
As yonder parrot, shrieking in the sun.)

Here's what the man said ; so—

*“Correct the portrait by the living face,
Man's God, by God's God in the mind of man.”*

You see! 'Tis trash—mere words.

Yet why does he, His Holiness,
Reflect on these?

Published with permission.

HOMAGE TO

A SEQUENCE OF SONNETS ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING

BY ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

I.

The clearest eyes in all the world they read
With sense more keen and spirit of sight more true
Than burns and thrills in sunrise, when the dew
Flames, and absorbs the glory round it shed,
As they the light of ages quick and dead,
Closed now, forsake us: yet the shaft that slew
Can slay not one of all the works we knew,
Nor death discrown that many-laurelled head.

The works of words whose life seems lightning wrought,
And moulded of unconquerable thought,
And quickened with imperishable flame,
Stand fast and shine and smile, assured that nought
May fade of all their myriad-moulded frame,
Nor England's memory clasp not Browning's name.

December 13th, 1889.

II.

Death, what hast thou to do with one for whom
Time is not lord, but servant? What least part
Of all the fire that fed his living heart,
Of all the light more keen than sundawn's bloom
That lit and led his spirit, strong as doom
And bright as hope, can aught thy breath may dart
Quench? Nay, thou knowest he knew thee what thou art,
A shadow born of terror's barren womb,
That brings not forth save shadows. What art thou,
To dream, albeit thou breathe upon his brow,
That power on him is given thee,—that thy breath
Can make him less than love acclaims him now,
And hears all time sound back the word it saith?
What part has thou then in his glory, Death?

III.

A graceless doom it seems that bids us grieve;
Venice and winter, hand in deadly hand,
Have slain the lover of her lovely strand
And singer of a storm-bright Christmas eve.

A graceless guerdon we that loved receive
 For all our love, from that the dearest land
 Love worshipped ever. Blithe and soft and bland,
 Too fair for storm to scathe or fire to cleave,
 Shone on our dreams and memories evermore
 The domes, the towers, the mountains and the shore
 That gird or guard thee, Venice: cold and black
 Seems now the face we loved as he of yore.
 We have given thee love—no stint, no stay, no lack:
 What gift, what gift is this thou hast given us back?

IV.

But he—to him, who knows what gift is thine,
 Death? Hardly may we think or hope, when we
 Pass likewise thither where tonight is he,
 Beyond the irremeable outer seas that shine
 And darken round such dreams as half divine
 Some sunlit harbor in that starless sea
 Where gleams no ship to windward or to lee,
 To read with him the secret of thy shrine.
 There too, as here, may song, delight and love,
 The nightingale, the sea-bird, and the dove,
 Fulfil with joy the splendor of the sky
 Till all beneath wax bright as all above:
 But none of all that search the heavens, and try
 The sun, may match the sovereign eagle's eye.

December 14th.

V.

Among the wondrous ways of men and time
 He went as one that ever found and sought
 And bore in hand the lamplike spirit of thought
 To illumine with instance of its fire sublime
 The dusk of many a cloudlike age and clime.
 No spirit in shape of light and darkness wrought,
 No faith, no fear, no dream, no rapture, nought
 That blooms in wisdom, nought that burns in crime,
 No virtue girt and armed and helmed with light,
 No love more lovely than the snows are white,
 No serpent sleeping in some dead soul's tomb,
 No song-bird singing from some live soul's height,
 But he might hear, interpret, or illumine
 With sense invasive as the dawn of doom.

VI.

What secret thing of splendor or of shade
Surmised in all those wandering ways wherein
Man, led of love and life and death and sin,
Strays, climbs, or cowers, allured, absorbed, afraid,
Might not the strong and sunlike sense invade
Of that full soul that had for aim to win
Light, silent over time's dark toil and din,
Life, at whose touch death fades as dead things fade?
O spirit of man, what mystery moves in thee
That he might know not of in spirit, and see
The heart within the heart that seems to strive,
The life within the life that seems to be,
And hear, through all thy storms that whirl and drive,
The living sound of all men's souls alive?

VII.

He held no dream worth waking: so he said,
He who stands now on death's triumphal steep,
Awakened out of life wherein we sleep
And dream of what he knows and sees, being dead.
But never death for him was dark or dread:
"Look forth" he bade the soul, and fear not. Weep,
All ye that trust not in his truth, and keep
Vain memory's vision of a vanished head
As all that lives of all that once was he
Save that which lightens from his word: but we,
Who, seeing the sunset-colored waters roll,
Yet know the sun subdued not of the sea,
Nor weep nor doubt that still the spirit is whole,
And life and death but shadows of the soul.

December 15th.

DEAD IN VENICE

BY ARTHUR SYMONS

"Browning is dead": a nation's grief:
But I too have my right to mourn,
Being no otherwise forlorn
Than soldiers who have lost their chief.

I see the field he won: I see

ROBERT BROWNING

The alien hosts he put to rout;
But him I see no more: without
The victor what is victory?

But he had conquered: that is well;
Well that the latest sound of all
Upon his dying ears to fall
Before the final silence fell,

Was triumph. 'Twas the hour to end,
The hour a kindly Fate (alas!),
Who would not let him overpass
Years that were still the strong man's friend,

Felicitously chose, ere yet
The winter darkened round his days;
And nought of pity mars our praise
Nor sorrow dares be quite regret.

Dead? But to me that cannot be—
Who loved him when a boy, nor still
Can read that name without a thrill
Which once was all-in-all to me;

Not dead, if dead means gone: death is
A consecration, and doth give
A surer life to those who live
Immortal in our memories.

And what is here or there? Vain show!
One life, a sleep between, he said,
Who now knows all things that the dead,
They who alone know all things, know.

But now That sleeps with closed eyes
In Venice underneath the day;
But now, but now, I can but lay
My wreath upon him where he lies.

*From the Atheneum, Dec. 21, 1889, p. 860; published
with kind permission of the editors and of the
authors.*

PROSPEXIT

BY MARGARET J. PRESTON

I would hate that Death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.

Browning's *Prospice*.

He watched for it—met it—and conquered!
With joy on his face,
He fronted the Fear. But the darkness
That shrouded the place
In mystery, failed to affright him;
For firmly and fast
He clung to his faith—that somewhither
Will triumph, at last,
God's ends in this earthly creation—
That Infinite Love,
Will lift the true soul that can trust Him,
All evils above!
Why fear then? That trust was his anchor;
Himself hath so said,
His life shall be only beginning,
When Death shall be dead!
Why should not the smile on his features
Betoken that he
Saw the "soul of his soul" through a radiance
None other might see?
Clasped hands with her—named her in rapture—
Reached forth, as if drawn
By fingers invisible—faltering
One word—and was gone!

From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 87; in The Critic, April 5, 1890; in The Independent.*

ROBERT BROWNING

IN THE POET'S CORNER

BY KATHARINE LEE BATES

Do they hold converse, keen as wine,
Under the pavement, they
Who make, in truth, the royal line
Of England, kings by right divine,
Crowned with the bay?

Yet one is lonely in that great,
Rejoicing fellowship,
—Lonely with Chaucer for a mate,
And Spenser, Dreamland's laureate,
He hears the drip

Of Florence dewes upon a mound
That golden tides of spring
Mantle with bloom, the angel-sound
Of Nightingales that all around
Her silence sing.

From Boston Browning Society, 1909-1910, p. 13; published with permission of the Society and of the author.

ROBERT BROWNING

BY E. F. BRIDELL-FOX

Stand still, true poet that you are,
I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us. When afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star.

The poet died last month, and now
The world which had been somewhat slow
In honouring his living brow,
Commands the palms.

Taken from an article by E. F. Bridell-Fox in The Argosy, Number 291, February, 1890.

HOMAGE TO

ROBERT BROWNING

BY FLORENCE COATES

"Never say of me that I am dead!"

Greathearted son of the Titan mother, Earth,
Fed at her breast,
He builded upward from the solid ground,
While listening ever for the heavenly sound
Of higher voices, to his soul addressed.

The elemental mother, lending might
With vital breath,
Made him, with her instinctive courage, brave;
And the immortals to his spirit gave
Their deeper knowledge and their scorn of death.

So evermore with energy and joy,
He followed Truth:
Still for the message and the vision sought,
Still to the temple of her worship brought
The imagination of unaging youth;

And in its largeness ever, viewing life,
Perceived its goal
To be beyond the bounds of space or time.
He strove to picture it in powerful rhyme;
But what he painted ever—was the soul!

Ay, 't was the soul that moved, delighted him,
Absorbed his care,
From early days in English Camberwell
To that far hour when tolled for him a knell,
Mournful across the deep, from Venice the all-fair.

Voiceless he sleeps, his giant task performed;
But in his stead,
Brave Caponsacchi, poignantly alive,
Pippa, beloved Pompilia, and Clive,
Forbid the world to think of him as dead!

From Florence Coates Poems, Vol. II, pp. 66-67; published with permission of the author.

DIVIDED

BY URSULA TANNENFORST

She sleeps near cypress-shadows blackly strown
Where white and tall the cross-crowned column stands;
All round her rest the dead from many lands;
Proud tombs that tower near some simple stone,
Nameless, and by a number marked alone;
Graves, graves, and flowers sown by loving hands
Crowded together, till the law commands
No more be buried. From their sunlit throne
The Apennines look o'er her as she lies
Where long ago their double tomb was made
That both might sleep beneath Italian skies.
Speak, "grateful Florence," let his dust be laid
By hers! From Venice, where he closed his eyes,
Bring Browning back, nor deem thy trust betrayed.

Venice, in English verse how oft have rung
The praises of the city of the sea!
Each poet brought his boon of love to thee;
Now noblest tribute take from laurels flung
O'er Browning's bier! By him thy song was sung,
And in thine arms he died. Rejoice, that he
Hath loved thee like a son, O Italy!
And watched prophetic while thy freedom sprung
From Apennines to ocean. Lo! complete
He hailed that vision, dawning ere she died,
His "lyric love," and graven on his heart
Was "Italy." O death, thy touch seems sweet,
So softly rounding, by the sea's fair bride,
That wondrous whole of life and love and art!

Divided! Earth to earth now lies at last
In sculptured aisle of England's abbey-shrine
The noblest son of Europe's poet-line
Since silence sank on Goethe's trumpet-blast.
Yet softly sighs a whisper, floating past,—
"Thine Italy adored, O love, grew mine,
With thee new life I won when loves divine
Called soul and song to freedom fresh and vast.
Fair is the Florence of our home the tread
Of pilgrims pauses near my peaceful mound,
And I had thought my grave held room for thee;

HOMAGE TO

Yet England claims thee, where her poet-dead
Rest round thy tomb. Among the laurel-crowned
For love's sweet sake—not fame's—find room for me!"

Not for the love of thy fair place of rest,
Nor even for thy verse, whose "golden ring"
Thine England close to Italy doth bring,
Should yonder grave upon the hillside's crest
Hold thee 'neath Tuscan flowers longer pressed
While he who helped thy heart's best blossoming
Who soared beside thee on his own strong wing,
Lies far away. A sepulchre unblest!
Long like a dream of love before the lands
Ye stood in poet-union fitly bound
On some fair height, our common earth above,
'Twere shame did death divide those wedded hands!
Nay; bind Italian unto English ground
In golden union both of verse and love.

England and Florence linked in golden rhyme
Young Milton, when he "changed fair Thames's stream
For lovely Arno," while the early gleam
Of poet-glory prophesied his prime.
England and Florence met in matchless chime
When, love inspired, she sang of freedom's dream,
And bade Aurora's tale the worth redeem
Of woman's minstrelsy, with voice sublime.
England, thy roll of poet-graves reads wrong
If Florence, filled with all her mighty dead,
Keeps England's daughter of a deathless song!
Unclose that tomb, and lay her laurelled head
By his; more dear to her the abbey's gloom
By him than Florence when her flowers bloom!

*From Poet Lore, II, pp. 193 to 195; published with the
permission of the editor.*

ROBERT BROWNING

THE REZZONICO PALACE

(*"A Roberto Browning, morto in questo palazzo"*)

BY ARTHUR UPSON

Low stars and moonlight beauty disavow
That death has ever known her; but around
Her melancholy portals only sound
Of waters makes her music; and the brow
Of stately wall records the legend how
"Died in this palace" a poet Love once crowned.
Here the cold Angel that strong harp unbound:
How chill and silent seem her chambers now!
O World, if ever moon should wander here
Where builds my heart its palace for your song,
And find such tablet in the outer wall,
The poet dead, the chambers still and drear,
Let not its hollow beauty win the throng
To reverence, but let it perish all!

*From "The City, a Poem Drama, and Other Poems";
published with permission of Mrs. Arthur Upson.*

THE IRIS-BRIDGE

BY HELEN GRAY CONE

That morn when men to one another said
"Browning is dead in Venice," ere the thrill
Of the tidings touched us, lo! our eyes beheld
Strange portent flashed upon the winter sky.
From hill to hill the jewel-splendid span

Of the light rainbow leaped, transcendent joy,
The brave, bright, delicate bridge, frail as a flower,
Yet firm enough to bear the feet of Hope.
—"Browning is dead," they told us; but our thoughts
Followed along the aerial sun-built arch
The onward quest of that still ardent soul.
Could he be holden of death, who built indeed,
Flinging his lyric faith across the vast,
An iris-bridge for man while words endure?

*From Boston Browning Society, 1909-1910, p. 17; pub-
lished with permission of the Society.*

HOMAGE TO

SALVE

BY CHARLOTTE PENDLETON

Browning Is Dead! Was is yesterday
Or a thousand misty years ago,
While ghoulish shadows, to and fro,
Flit o'er the lamp where the flame was housed,
And blink in the light of the rising day?

What matter, I say, friends, though my clay
Still lie in Italy all unhoused,
When the soul that informed it is away;
Browning Is Dead!

Though already the shadows gather between
And mystery shroud my mortal way,
For that other star with mine, serene,
Commingles once more in a deathless ray,
And our married souls, within the screen
Were kissing, as earth sighed yesterday,
Browning Is Dead!

From Poet Lore, Vol. 1, p. 545; published with the permission of the editor.

LETTERS OF ROBERT BROWNING AND ELIZABETH BARRETT

BY REV. WILLIAM BRUNTON

Oh, dear departed saints of highest song!
Behind the screen of time your love lay hid,
Its full unfoldment was in life forbid—
As doing such divine affection wrong,
But now we read, with interest deep and strong,
And lift from off the magic jar the lid,
And Lo! your spirit stands the clouds amid,

And speaks to us in some superior tongue!
Devotion such as yours is heavenly-wise,
And yet the possible of earth ye show;
Ye dwellers of the blue of summer skies,
Through you a finer love of love we know;
It is as if the angels moved with men,
And key of paradise is found again!

ROBERT BROWNING

LETTERS OF ROBERT BROWNING AND
ELIZABETH BARRETT

ANONYMOUS

Forgive, sweet Lovers of this book,
The sad, who scan your story;
Forgive their wistful eyes that look
Forgive, sweet Lovers of this book,
Their knowledge where your fingers shook,
Their watching of your glory!
Forgive, sweet Lovers of this book,
The sad, who scan your story.

Accept, true Lovers, here enshrined,
The few who share your gladness
In touch of heart and soul and mind;
Accept true Lovers, here enshrined,
Their seeing of themselves defined,
Their growth to joy, from sadness
Accept, true Lovers here enshrined,
The few who share your gladness.

Condone, great Lovers—being dead,
The printing of these pages;
Nor shrink that we—we, too, have read;
Condone, great Lovers—being dead,
Our vision of the Gold you shed
For hearts in coming ages
Condone, great Lovers, being dead,
The printing of these pages.

BROWNING

BY LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON

That longed-for door stood open, and he passed
On through the star-sown fields of light, and stayed
Before its threshold, glad and unafraid.
Since all that Life and Death could do at last
Was over, and the hour so long forecast
Had brought his footsteps thither. Undismayed
He entered. Were his lips on her lips laid?
God knows. They met, and their new day was vast.

HOMAGE TO

THE POET'S HOME-GOING

BY H. D. RAWNSLEY

"I shall soon depart for Venice on my way homeward."
Extract from a letter of Browning's written to a friend
a few weeks before his death.

His heart was where the summer ever shines,
He saw the English swallow eastward come,
And still among the olives and the vines,
Or underneath the dark sun-scented pines
Of Asola, he hummed his latest lines,
And bade his white-winged songs go flying home.

Then when the red sails round by Lido came
To rest, and idle now the gondolier
Beneath the Lion and those masts aflame,
Guessed fingers in the old Venetian game,
A dark boat neared. Death called the poet's name,
Then straight toward the sunset seemed to steer.

Another prow pushed quay-wards, wrought of gold,
Pure gold, and with the lily in her hand
The Maid, whose virgin arms did once enfold
The world's Salvation, leaned to bless the hold,
And smile on him whose music had extolled
The Lion and the Lily of the land.

.

Then up into the lordly Palace Hall
Bright angels passed to lead him to the shore,
And o'er his body did they lay for pall
Italia's love and England's loss, and all
Cried, "He whose spirit the Heaven from Earth doth call,
Freed men, and lo, is freed for evermore."

.

"Yea freed the most to find his being whole,
'The broken arc, in Heaven a perfect round';
Free with the freedom of that kindred soul
Whose love and life through all the under-roll

Of sorrowful dark, has kept him to the goal,
And free to utter his full self in sound."

Then with those angels silently he went,
Pushed from the steps, left Venice flaming bright
Above her sunset waters; backward bent
Towers shook, so swift astern the waves were sent
Domes danced, and still the harp's accompaniment
Came with his voice to call us toward the light.

And other voices called, for other prow
Pushed after, gorgeous, sweet for myrtle flowers,
With long-robed men therein, upon whose brows
Were caps of honour such as he who knows
Bellini's Doge can tell of, men of vows
By their tight lips, the men who built the towers.

Alas! they cried, "To what far island steers
The boat that bears our poet-soul away?
We built the city, but his glory rears
Anew the walls, eternal as the years;
We took the sea to marriage, but he wears
The ring that weds our Venice. Let him stay!"

.
Then the stars paled, yet paled not that bright star,
But grew: the grey sea heaved from dusk to gold,
And sailing we were ware of hills afar—
The amethystine hills where angels are—
That rose from burnished calm no tempests mar
To skies of peace that never can grow old.

.
We neared the land, and multitudes foreknew
His coming, waved a forestry of palm.
The singer's face most like an angel grew,
Far off we saw what fires rekindled flew
Forth from his eyes, as near the vessel drew,
And o'er the waves to meet us came a psalm.

"O girder of Truth's sword upon men's thigh,
And looser of men's fear for mortal harm,
If but they leave their castles to the sky,

HOMAGE TO

And go forth dauntless when the foe draws nigh,
Thine was the clarion call to victory
Against the world's inevitable swarm!"

Then to the singer did they bring a crown,
And thoughts that long had struggled unto birth
Took form melodious, wonderful, full-grown,
And many souls come near to him half known,
Souls strong through loss and loving like his own,
Friends of his mind and making upon earth.

On either side to let him forward move
The gracious congregation did divide;
But those clear eyes that flashed for joy to prove
The bliss of recognition seemed to rove,
As looking for fulfilment of all love,
As yearning still, and still unsatisfied.

.

E'en as he gazed, with amaranth on her brow,
And all the long upgathered love of years,
Came one whose eyes from distance seemed to know
Her bliss his perfect glory; with such glow
Souls met and mingled, the sad Earth below
Felt the far joy in Heaven, and ceased from tears.

*From the Browning Centenary, pp. 14 to 18; published
with permission of the author.*

BROWNING

BY A. BENNETT

In the "quiet-coloured ending" of the golden afternoon,
Robed and crowned with flowers and moving to the
ripple's lulling tune
Did they bear the body of the Master o'er the grey lagoon.

At the prow there beamed an angel. Was it such Guer-
cino drew?
From the stern a lion's kingly front victorious rose to
view.
He with voice of angel, heart of lion, lay between the two.

ROBERT BROWNING

Followed him in tearful silence down the dim unpaven
way

"Certain people of importance," "men and women" such
as they

Live and love and laugh and weep undying in his death-
less lay.

Singer of her "dear dead women," he who drew her pale
decline,

Took the golden hair, embalmed it in his rich majestic
line,

Venice bore him on her bosom poured his latest anodyne.

Not as to the sombre English Abbey, there to join his
peers,

Let us dream of him, in pageant borne amid a nation's
tears—

Rather in the still Venetian twilight, led of gondoliers

Down the lanes of light and twinkling amber that the
sunset flings

O'er the city "where the Doges used to wed the sea with
rings,

Where St. Mark's is,"—where died one of Poesy's su-
preme kings.

*From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 67.**

Fulfilled, December 12, 1889

Oh, the blessed fruition

Of peace out of pain!

Of a light without darkness,

A clasping again!

Of a full soul's reunion

In Love's endless reign!

Sing, O Earth, with new joy

At this victory won!

For the faith that endured

'Till the setting of sun!

For the hope that shone clear

Through the mighty work done!

For the love that sought God

To guide love here begun!

Sing, O Earth, with new joy

For such victory won!

*From The Brownings and America, p. 103; published
with permission.*

HOMAGE TO

BROWNING

BY HENRIETTA HUXLEY

This day within the Abbey, where of old
Our kings were sepulchred, a King of song
That, like his life, was truthful, pure and strong,—
Browning among his peers is laid to rest,
Borne to the grave by loving hearts, and stoled
In shining raiment that his genius wove.
No lingering sickness his: with swift surprise
Death flashed the Light Eternal in his eyes,
And blinded Life. So this way he was blest.
Perhaps in some far star he now has met
His rose of love, his ne'er forgotten wife.
And they again, as once, in spirit blent,
Look through the veil this day, and hear the fret
Of many feet; the swelling music spent
On mourning listeners. With voices low,
Chanting *her* hymn, the boys sing as they go
"He giveth his beloved sleep." What though
The perishable forms these two once wore,
In different lands lie sundered by the sea?
Their spirits smile, at this our fond regret.
"What matters anything since we have met?"
They radiant sing. "Together, oh what more
Can love long parted from the Eternal crave?"
And if there be no meeting past the grave,
If all is darkness, silence, still 'tis rest.
Be not afraid, ye waiting hearts that weep,
For "God still giveth his beloved sleep,"
And if an endless sleep He wills, so best!

*From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 67.**

IN MEMORIAM—ROBERT BROWNING

BY THE REV. JOHN OWEN

I.

Grim Harvester, Death, thou hast gathered in the curve
of thy sickle keen
A ripe shock of mellowest corn—fair fruitage for centu-
ries to glean;
But though golden and ripe for the reaper, we grudge
such a harvest of worth,

ROBERT BROWNING

In its fullness of aureate splendour, should be lost to
man's vision on earth.

2.

In fruition of years and of glory hath passed to his rest
the Seer,
Whose inwardly-piercing vision through man's universe
rang'd clear,
Whose oracles pregnant and strong—as a Hebrew
prophet's of old—
New glimpses of truth aye revealed to eyes gifted with
sense to behold.

3.

We mourn for the thinker whose thought disdained the
mean level of men,
Sounding down to hid depths of their being, soaring
upward beyond their ken,
Threading with insight unerring—a Seer-spirit's intuitive
force—
Each subtle and devious bye-path of man's life's labyrinthine
course.

4.

With lute still attuned and voiceful, the hand from its
strings that awoke
With masterly skill new beauties by each music-sensitive
stroke,
Lies numb'd in death, and the tongue whose tones were
so pure and strong
Is hushed, and will never more rapture our souls with its
magical song.

5.

A blank dreary stillness thus reigns where resonant
music—voiced
To man's deepest thought and his sorrow, bringing solace
or strength that rejoiced—
Lately gladdened our ears—and we, with the gathering
silence grown dumb
In voiceless sympathy wail our song-bereaved years to
come.

6.

Sons of the dead Prophet, we mourn the orphaning doom
we have met,

HOMAGE TO

We grieve that one Seer less remains to chide human
folly and fret,
That a Star of rare brilliance and guidance is gone from
our human sky,
And the dark of man's world has grown denser for every
discerning eye.

7.

Yet may we still warm in the sun,—though its orb we,
with boding unrest,
Have watch'd in sunset glory sink in the gold clouds of
the West,—
Thoughts that the world may have chill'd in the depths
of its frozen night—
True feelings that Self may have blunted, as a flower is
stunted with blight.

8.

“Stored Sunshine” we hold in his writings, packed daintily
for our joy,
As men store the soul of the Lightning, and its force and
its radiance employ;
The sunlight condensed in his pages, that should make
men enlightened and free,
Will, long as our language is spoken, give strength to
our children to be.

9.

True, we who rejoiced in his presence, in the light of his
winsome smile,
We, of our sorrows and doubts whose word-witchery
served to beguile,
We, in the night of bereavement, must endure its lack
and its pain;
The sweet sentience of Love, death-smitten, on earth
revives never again.

From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 30.

IDOL AFFECTIONS

Inscribed to Robert Browning

BY CLARA BLOOMFIELD MOORE

Our idols are our executioners.—Amiel.
God's care be God's.—Browning.

There is no day of all my years whereon
I could not darken every sunniest hour
With memories of my life that was, before
God drew our distant paths near and more near.
I know the Hand which broke before my face
The idols I had wrought from clay and clothed
In golden raiment, then within my heart
Installed, as on an altar-shrine, to fall
And crush me where I knelt,—more merciless
Than mediæval priests who racked the saints,
Yet spared their tortured frames when strength waxed
low.

Ah, then I thought my heart a sepulchre,
Where only weeds and noisome things would dwell,
In which no ray could ever shine again!
Unto this place of graves thou didst not scorn
To come, dear friend, bringing a jewelled lamp
To hang above the empty shrine, and flash
Its beams where now for weeds lie flowers which
gained

Their birth and growth in gardens of the soul.
Like incense doth their perfume rise, by day
And night, to heaven, as rise my prayers to God
In thanks for such a matchless gift as thine,—
Renewed like amaranth blooms as seasons roll.
What can I do but trust the Hand which worked
Such marvels for me when I prayed for death?
“God’s care be God’s”: I wait upon His will
To lift all shadows from my life that shines.
“God’s care be God’s”: I’ll leave to Him His task,
And, trusting in His love, forget to ask.

*From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 109.**

HOMAGE TO

ROBERT BROWNING

BY C. P. CRANCH

Themes strong, verse blood-warm with the limbs and veins
Of life at full flush; yet as when one sees
Some unknown Grecian youth Praxiteles
Or Phidias raised from flesh on Attic plains
Into perennial marble, the coarse stains
Of corporal frailty cleansed by ministries
Of art divine from all impurities,
Till of crude fact the living soul remain,—
So with the touch of genius wrought this seer
Of passion and of truth, till heart and mind
Share in the vigor of the fleshly frame.
Though palpable to sense his forms appear,
In the soul's life transfigured and refined
The higher art that nature makes, they claim.

From "Browning Memorial," published with the permission of the Boston Browning Society.

ROBERT BROWNING

BY AUBREY DE VERE

I.

Gone from us! that strong singer of late days—
Sweet singer should be strong—who, tarrying here,
Chose still rough music for his themes austere,
Hard-headed, aye but tender-hearted lays,
Carefully careless, garden half, half maze.
His thoughts he sang, deep thoughts to thinkers dear,
Now flashing under gleam of smile or tear,
Now veiled in language like a breezy haze
Chance-pierced by sunbeams from the lake it covers.
He sang man's ways—not heights of sage or saint,
Not highways broad, not haunts endeared to lovers;
He sang life's byways, sang its angles quaint,
Its Runic lore inscribed on stave or stone;
Song's short-hand strain,—its key oft his alone.

II.

Shakespeare's old oak "gnarled and unwedgeable"
Yields not so sweet a wood to harp or lyre

As tree of smoother grain; and chorded shell
Is spanned by strings tenderer than iron wire.
What then? Stern tasks iron and oak require!
Iron deep-mined, hard oak from stormy fell:
Steel-armed the black ship breasts the ocean's swell,
Oak-ribbed laughs back the raging tempest's ire.
Old friend, thy song I deem a ship whose hold
Is stored with mental spoils of ampler price
Than Spain's huge galleons in her age of gold,
Or Indian carracks from the isles of spice.
Brave Argosy! cleave long the waves as now;
And all the sea-gods sing around thy prow!

*From Macmillan's Magazine, the New York Times,
Sunday, Feb. 16, 1890.*

AT BROWNING'S GRAVE

BY H. D. RAWNSLEY

7th May, 1912

Come forth ye great immortals from your sleep,
And swell today our glad memorial throng,
Ye sowed the golden seed of thought, we reap
Your deathless fruit of song.

Come not as victors with a flash of swords,
Nor clad in war's impenetrable mail,
But crowned with laurels, armed with fiery words,
Whose music shall not fail.

Leave your fair halls of melody and psalm,
To join in honour to our spirit-guest
—The man who taught us Right must bear the
palm,
And Love in Heaven find rest.

Therefore to-day, in this most holy place,
Where still the harps that helped the ages ring,
We thank the Eternal Father for his grace,
Who bade the prophet sing.

*From the Browning Centenary, p. 12; published with
permission of the author.*

HOMAGE TO

BROWNING

ANONYMOUS

No, not once more amid the funeral train,
With softened grief, do I desire to see,
A friend enshrined in that great canopy,
Of England's glory, or to hear the strain
Of honour surge around his senseless brain.
Too often have I joined the minstrelsy,
Which there emblazons on our history
An everlasting name: no, not again.

But as I note the hour, and mourn apart,
'Twill be to think there is another grave,
And greater tomb than that where they would save
And seal the laurels of a poet's art.
More deeply buried than in aisle or nave:
His resting place is in a nation's heart.

From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 51; also in
St. James Gazette.*

AT BROWNING'S GRAVE

BY ALFRED FORMAN

Ashes to ashes! Dust again to dust!
Once more the solemn words upon the ear
Are launched in love and worship. Let no tear
Betoken in us any lack of trust

That here a mighty life has found its just
And unbewailable and perfect end.
Here at thy grave, as Poet, Man, and Friend.
We hail thee blest, as all who know thee must.

Through piled and woven flowers our living heart
Yearns downward to thy dead one. Love and Pride
Contend in us which owns the greater part.
Farewell? We leave thee where thou dost abide,
In twofold aspect of thy life and art,
The greatest Englishman since Milton died.

From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 51; also in
Court Circular.*

ROBERT BROWNING

AT 29 DE VERE GARDENS

BY F. T. PALGRAVE

28th December, 1889

Twilight and peace in the chamber;
Twilight of death and peace
For him who the strife, the long battle of life,
Had fought out to the last release:

Dead in a dying City,
Through her silent water-ways sped
Toward the misty West, and the place of rest
And gray home of the mighty dead.

Now bathed in silence and twilight
Where with wisdom's roseate glow,
Quick lightnings of wit, the chamber was lit
So lately,—yet so long ago:

Where eyes that from youth ne'er looked on me
But the heart's bright message they bore,—
The welcoming lip, the hand's honest grip,
Were mine—mine now never more:—

There with amaranth cross, and bay-wreath,
Inane munus, I strove,
Knelt there and pray'd where they said he was laid,
To do the last office of love;

Love reverent, grateful, deep,
For the treasure that only they,
The poets of Love, the wise from Above,
To the world in its deadness convey:

For he, Star-crested, Hope-armour'd,
Struck straight at a swelling tide;
In the valley of doubt, with clarion shout,
Chased coward and doubter aside.

Then the vanish'd Presence in brightness
Was felt once more in the room,
While the worn-out shred the great spirit had shed
Lay garnish'd and still for the tomb.

HOMAGE TO

Not there was the soul I had loved,
Where the mortal raiment was laid,—
Death's fast vanishing spoil, the lamp without oil
The blank sheath of the God-wrought blade,—
Bare walls of man's house, where no fire
On the central hearth-stone glows!—
Till silently round me a vapour of sound,
The music of memory, rose:—

*And Blest are the dead in the Lord;
For they rest from their labours, I heard;
With a Love is best!—and the life now at rest
Was summ'd in that one brief word.*

*From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 49.**

BROWNING

BY E. R. CHAPMAN

Undaunted spirit, who didst help us best—
Best help the world—by being glad and strong,
Still proving gloriously that strength and song
Are not disjoined—not yet—take thou thy rest!

Rest well! Thy country clasps thee to her breast,
See, in her Abbey; thy disciples throng
To greet thee these historic aisles among,
Too true to thee to mourn—to weep too blest.

And thou, brave heart, grieve thou not overmuch
If in that distant Flower-city fair
Thy lyric love lies evermore alone.

Your souls are one; your disrobed spirits touch,
Re-wedded, glad—and England, for her share,
Crowned you long since upon a common throne.

*From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 50.**

ROBERT BROWNING

TO BROWNING

BY WALTER S. BIGELOW

Stones of Venice! a heart has turned cold that had often
beat high,
Living over the lives of the men you have seen in their
prime;
Whom it knew by the record brought down from an
earlier time;
Whom it loved with such love, that its ardour forbade
them to die.

From a lyre held so close that the heart's every passionate
beat
Drew a sigh or a song from its sensitive, sonorous strings,
Rose to heaven—like a bird with a message between her
white wings—
Blended strains of the present and past, in a music
complete.

Faithful heart! that turned cold only now, at the touch
of that foe
Whom it feared not: whose coming it hailed, with a joy
undissembled:
Friend, not foe, who should bring it once more to *her*
breast; and it trembled,
Not with dread, but a yearning desire for the summons
to go.

*From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 126.**

ROBERT BROWNING

BY MICHAEL FIELD

Slowly we disarray,
Our leaves grow few,
Few on the bough, and many on the sod:
Round him no ruining autumn tempest blew,
Gathered on genial day,
He fills, fresh as Apollo's bay,
The Hand of God.

From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, No. 10, p. 28,
also Academy Dec. 21, 1889.*

HOMAGE TO

ROBERT BROWNING

An Acrostic Sonnet. In Memoriam

BY THOMAS HUTCHINSON

Robed in the beauty of a blameless life,
Our poet sleeps, whose name Time will revere;
Blest in the love of those he held most dear
Ere he was called to join his poet-wife.
Remembering aye God's will of good is rife,
The thought of death to him gave doubt nor fear,
But hope unending; wherefore sob or tear?—
Removed is he from earthly care and strife.
Of human hearts the workings well he knew,
Was conversant with their most secret throes,
Nor cared to sing his songs in minor keys;
In human hearts his message echoes true:—
Not pain, not sorrow comes at lifetime's close;
Great though the change, greater the after-peace.

*From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 29.**

A SONNET ON BROWNING

ANONYMOUS

Calm, O thou mighty heart, and cold, thou hand,
Calm calm and cold in the beloved clime
Amid whose magic rose the deathless rhyme,
Ringing like tocsin through our sleeping land.
O dear dead voice, thy half-divine command
Called forth creations durabler than time,
Life's epic pictures, earth's lyric mime,
God-singer whom but few may understand.

Oft caught thy firm keen eyes the fields of morn,
From the high silence of the Pisgah-peak
Whence flashed their glory on marchers far below;
Now that for thee love's light of light is born,
O dear dead voice, if we could hear thee speak,
How thou wouldst tell what all are fain to know.

*From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 75.**

ON HEARING OF THE DEATH OF
ROBERT BROWNING

BY H. J. BULKELEY

Dead! But it is not possible. That mind,
That energy, that hope can never die.
Time to our music deaf, our beauty blind,
May kill all, all but thy vitality.

Can never die! Not while this England lasts,
Nor while our English tongue its force and fame
O'er all the world in widening circle casts,
Shall pale the lustre of thy peerless name.

O fighter brave, as in thy *Prospice*
Thou that last fight has fought, and to thy breast
Thy soul's soul thou hast clasped again. Ah! she
And thou—with God 'tis safe to leave the rest.

But we would crown thee here as well as there,
Crown thee and her together, king and queen.
Through all its æons such a regal pair,
Beauteous and strong, the world has never seen.

And shall it ever see?—Her tenderness,
Her lofty passion, rush of wingéd words
Pregnant with love and life—And less and less
We need be taught the temper of thy sword's

Flashing and piercing; thou who man as men
To us presented in such varied throngs
Through all its common-places new and then
The world would wonder, as their proper songs

Sang all and each, but never one the same
Diverse in mood and character and time,
Diverse as pain from joy, as snow from flame;
But through them all still rang a subtle rhyme.

Subtle and strong and true, of mind and soul
'And art and love and God. Here Cleon stands
Musing of art that would ensphere the whole;
And here Pompilia wrings those hopeless hands.

HOMAGE TO

Here an Apostle dying leaves to doubt
A noble mission. Here a Caliban
Reasons of God. Here with a stupid shout
Of thanks to Christ men burn their fellow man.

Here Martin Relph would half conceal his sin,
Blurting it out. Here noble Luria dies
For trustless Florence; horse and rider win
Good news for Ghent; the gipsy duchess flies

Back to her liberty; unconscious paints
His life that famous master, or unknown
He fills the empty aisles with babes and Saints,
Who used his art for Art and God alone.

Here Paracelsus knows and sins, but loves
And dies. Here David's music draws the stars.
Sordello here his art to action moves,
And failing triumphs; Clive his crowns and scars

Tops with one boyish deed; high Strafford falls;
The trodden Jew from scorn and hatred frees
His soaring faith; sweet Pippa, passing, calls
To souls; Balaustion chants Euripides.

Abt Vogler here may raise his walls of sound;
The Arab lose his horse for love; the sage,
Ferishtah, hint the truth; lo! one fierce bound,
False Gauthier grovels. So from page to page

Weaves the magician robes and thoughts for all,
And yet doth clothe himself in every mood;
As some great actor in a carnival
Puts on a warrior's helm, a friar's hood,

An angel's wreath, a demon's horns and head,
Is everyone in turn, and yet the eyes
Of her whose vision by her love is led
Sees him, her loved one, in each new disguise;

So did we love to see thee, many, one;
So didst thou teach that wide philosophy
In shapes as various as the hues that run
Through the great bow that blendeth earth and sky

ROBERT BROWNING

In coloured harmony. So many voices,
And yet one mind that all informed and blest!
O poet, master, each of us rejoices,
Must still rejoice in all that good and best

Thou hast so generously poured out to teach us,
Our minds and souls; we learn and still are glad.
From that new life canst thou no longer reach us?
There sing without *our* praise? We are not sad.

We cannot be, for thou hast left for knowing,
For thinking, loving, all thy works and thee.
They praise thee best who best to God are showing
Them thou hast taught to know, to love, to be;
That in their souls some little seeds are growing,
In blessing showered from thou bounteous tree;
Some little sparks of keener fancy glowing,
Kindled at thy rich flame of poesy;
Some little streams of faith and freedom flowing
To pulse accordant with thy boundless sea.

*From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, pp. 68-70.**

THE BURIAL OF ROBERT BROWNING

BY MICHAEL FIELD

Upon St. Michael's Isle
They laid him for awhile
That he might feel the Ocean's full embrace,
And wedded be
To that wide sea—
The subject and the passion of his race.
As Thetis, from some lovely under-ground
Springing, she girds him round
With lapping sound
And silent space:
Then, on more honor bent,
She sues the firmament
And bids the hovering, western clouds combine
To spread their sabled amber on her lustrous brine.

It might not be
He should lie free

HOMAGE TO

For ever in the soft light of the sea,
For lo! one came,
Of step more slow than fame,
Stooped over him—we heard her breathe his name—
And, as the light drew back,
Bore him across the track
Of the subservient waves that dare not foil
That veiled, maternal figure of its spoil.

Ah! where will she put by
Her journeying majesty?
She hath left the lands of the air and sun;
She will take no rest till her course be run.
Follow her far, follow her fast,
Until at last,
Within a narrow transept led,
Lo! she unwraps her face to pall her dead.

'Tis England who has travelled far,
England who brings
Fresh splendor to her galaxy of Kings.
We kiss her feet, her hands,
Where eloquent she stands;
Nor dare to lead
A wailful choir about the poet dumb
Who is become
Part of the glory that her sons would bleed
To save from scar;
Yea, hers in every deed
As Runnymede,
Or Trafalgar.

From the London Spectator.

TO ROBERT BROWNING

BY L. ORMISTON CHANT

Browning has left us; he went from us singing
Songs of the old world up into the new
Just a last lay to his lovers down-flinging
Lover of love, and the truest of true!
How we shall mourn for him, long for him, need him,
Miss the bright ring of his clarion note

ROBERT BROWNING

Piercing the frosts of the mists in the morning,
Miss the night-trill from the nightingale's throat.
What have we lost? Not the path where he led us
Over the moorlands of thought to the sea;
Not the steep climb up the crags, where he waited,
While we drew breath, and though panting, were free.
These he has left; but the sunshine he lent them
Died, when he died, with the light in his eyes.
What have we lost? Why the soul of the music;
Voice that gave tongue to the winds from the skies.

Browning has left us, he went from us singing;
Never a song more triumphant than his!
Like a great billow high-rising, and flinging
Thunder and psalm where the hurricane is,
So fell his voice on men's storms and uprisings,
Sounding clear faith o'er doubt's turbulent wave,
Wise and so kind his deep thoughts for the doubters,
Leading them forth from the land of the grave.
Yet with a love, such a love, ringing through it,
Born of his grief in a desolate prime,
Bidding all love follow Love, and for ever
Pass to her beautiful presence, in time.
Now he has gone. His dear name in the heaven
Of the world's singers shines out like a star,
Great Poet, and Teacher; true lover, we follow
O'er valley and mountain, to seek thee afar!

From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 66; also in
The Women's Penny Paper, Dec. 21, 1889.*

ROBERT BROWNING

BY ELIZABETH PORTER GOULD

—A peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast.
O thou soul of my soul, I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

HOMAGE TO

BROWNING

BY IRENE ELDER MORTON

He sits at last among his peers,
While we stand chilled with eyes grown dim
In looking over life's grey fields,
And feel the heart-light folded in.

O great soul! entered in to know
The fulness of the Central Life!
O giant leader of the race,
Who never with the world made strife,

But led it surely, grandly on,
Scaling clear heights with leap and bound,—
Then, beckoning with a strong man's hand,
He kept his way to higher ground!

No maudlin cry he gave the world,—
"Behold my grief, pity my pain;"
Strong as the breath of Alpine hills,
Sweet as the sound of summer rain,

The songs he gave us. Evermore
The deathless might of English speech
Shall sound their notes from shore to shore,
And to the coming nations teach

That it is nobler to endure,
And smother back the cry of pain—
Shall call us onward to the heights,
To press ahead and bear the strain.

He wore no caste-bound fetters here;
A man of men he proved his soul;
The mighty pulse within his words
Beat full and free above control.

The illumined fringes of his thoughts
Have set the world's face after him,
As one would follow clear flute notes
Heard in cool aisles of forests dim.

With loving face of child and friend

ROBERT BROWNING

To look on as the last of earth,
God wrapt him in a robe of light,
And gave him strong immortal birth.

He looks again in the clear eyes
Of her, the love-dream of his youth,
The moonlit side of his great heart,
To whom he gave his manhood's truth.

Perfect conditions of new life
Are vibrant to his being there,—
Gone in to feel the wider thrill,
Gone in to breathe the purer air.

*From A Treasury of Canadian Verse, edited by Theodore
H. Rand, p. 249; published with permission of
author.*

IN MEMORIAM

BY ROBERT, LORD HOUGHTON

Robert Browning, Died 12th December, 1889

The tale of how you found the promised rest
Flashed fast from north to south, from sea to sea,
My father's friend, all friendliness to me,
Dear Scholar-Poet,—ever welcome guest:
And gone you are to seek your loved-one's breast,
Sped your free soul from Italy the free,
Soul never flinching from the dim To Be,
Nor doubting of the Good,—and thus, 'tis best.
'Tis best,—and I, six thousand miles away
From your and Nelson's Abbey* arched in gloom,
Hear through the surge that thunders on the bay
An echo of your verse's** roll and boom
That doubly sanctifies Trafalgar day,—
And waft this Afric leaf to reach your tomb.

Capetown, 1889.

* At the battle off Cape St. Vincent, "Nelson . . . gave orders for boarding . . . it was done in an instant, he himself leading the way, and exclaiming—'Westminster Abbey, or victory!'"—Southey's "Life of Nelson."

** "Home Thoughts from the Sea."

*From Stray Verses 1889-1890; London, John Murray,
Albemarle St., 1891*

HOMAGE TO

SONNET

BY MRS. LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON

The Century was young—the month was May—
The spacious East was kindled with a light
That lent a sudden glory to the night,
And a new star began its upward way
Toward the high splendor of the perfect day.
With pure white flame, inexorably bright,
It reached the souls of men—no stain so slight
As to escape its all-revealing ray.

When countless voices cried “The Star has set!”
And through the lands there surged a sea of pain,
Was it Death’s triumph—victory of Woe?
Nay! There are lights the sky may not forget;
When suns, and moons, and souls shall rise again,
In the New Life’s wide East that star shall glow.

From The Brownings and America, p. 38; published with permission.

TO ROBERT BROWNING

BY GEORGE MEREDITH

“Now dumb is he who waked the world to speak,
And voiceless hangs the world beside his bier.
Our words are sobs, our cry of praise a tear:
We are the smitten mortal, we the weak.
We see a spirit on Earth’s loftiest peak
Shine, and wing hence the way he makes more clear:
See a great Tree of Life that never sere
Dropped leaf for aught that age or storms might wreak.
Such ending is not Death: such living shows
What wide illumination brightness sheds
From one big heart, to conquer man’s old foes:
The coward, and the tyrant, and the force
Of all those weedy monsters raising heads
When Song is murk from springs of turbid source.”

From Browning Society Papers, Part 12, p. 27; also Pall Mall Budget, Dec. 13, 1889.

ROBERT BROWNING

TO THE MEMORY OF ROBERT BROWNING

(1812-1889)

BY JOHN SAVARY

Last irony to last age of iron—blundered
Earthward falling not a meteor vain,
But a starry poet soul that wondered
How Jove's eagle fell, that late soared again!
Cloud-rapt and rushing onward in disdain,
Power along the far-shining track down thundered
Past me his long thoughts' heaven-laden train,
Jarring sense by weight and speed of packed brain
Which fruitage bore of ages grasped and plundered.
We ne'er shall see his equal or a second
He has gone from us, still condensing scorn
Of our language here for his too high-born
Thoughts: Æschylus and Shakespeare him have
beckoned.

And we hear as when Balaustion said
Unto a friend "Euripides is dead."

From Literary World, Jan. 4, 1890.

THE TWELFTH OF DECEMBER, 1889

BY RICHARD WATSON GILDER

On this day Browning died?
Say, rather: On the tide
That throbs against those glorious palace walls;
That rises—pauses—falls,
With melody, and myriad-tinted gleams;
On that enchanted tide,
Half real, and half poured from lovely dreams,
A Soul of Beauty—a white, rhythmic flame—
Passed singing forth into the Eternal Beauty whence it
came.

From "Browning Memorial"; published with the permission of the Boston Browning Society.

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HOMAGE TO

ROBERT BROWNING

BY FREDERIC BRETON

(*Died at Venice 10 p. m., December 12, 1889*)

The lamp is out! The house of clay
Stands dark and tenantless to-day!
"To him and us, is't loss or gain?" you say.

See! Yonder flashed a meteor bow!
An instant only, and, beyond the flow
Of salt lagoon, we saw the ocean glow.

An instant only! Then the night
Seemed darker than before the light
That broke our blindness with its arrow flight.

The darker?—Yes! But we have learned
In vain, for what our spirit yearned
—The wider world, whereon that meteor burned?

A world outside our little woe
Kept wholesome by the ebb and flow
Of mighty tides!—Gain surely, this to know?

So stand we at the outer gate
Whence beamed a beacon light of late,
But now untenanted, dark, desolate.

Yes! House all darkness, but the road
Of life where shone that kind abode,
The brighter for the Pisgah sight bestowed!

For Meteor, Master,—both made plain,
Around a life of seeming bane,
God's reconciling ocean.—This *our* gain!

And *his*?—Yet greater, for away
From night, he sees in deathless day
His faith fulfilled—Love, Power, come full in play.

From The Academy, December 10, 1896.

ROBERT BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING

BY ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS-WARD

Nay,—let the soul go its own way upon
Its last desire; mine to the uttermost
Do ye fulfil. Thus shall it be. Obey.
Within the crypt where England calls her great
Greatest, and names her dearest yet more dear
Unto the prayers than to the pride of men,
Let Shakespeare, loving lightly, rest content.
Leave Milton, desolate in home and tomb.
Leave placid Wordsworth to his sylvan dream.

For me, I do aspire more highly than
The grandest lonely ghost in Westminster.

“Where the heart is, let the grave be, also.”

“Soul of my soul!” I “show thee,” and “die last.”
Behold, I am awearied, and would sleep.
No place for me, where was no place for *Her*.
Poets and sages chosen of all time!
Ye to your glory go,—I to my wife.

From New York Independent.

AT KING'S CHAPEL

January 28

BY MRS. ANNIE E. JOHNSON

Awhile from the crowded street
Are stayed these hurrying feet,
In the chapel, stately and old.
Why gather today the throng?
A poet's heart is cold,
A glorious king of song.

Soft music, swelling clear,
Breaks the solemn silence here;
In the softly shadowed light,
Glow roses, red and white;

HOMAGE TO

Lillies and laurel leaves
A delicate fragrance shed;
Here many a spirit grieves,
For Browning, dead.

To give him honor due,
Meet kindly hearts and true,
Those who have loved his song
So hopeful, glad and strong
(Read, haply, now through tears).
They love the generous thought,
To nobler action wrought,—
In this they are his peers.

Poet, whose laurelled head
Rests in the Abbey's gloom,
Where England's sacred dead
Lie grandly sepulchred,
And *thou*, whose simple tomb
Is 'neath Italian skies,
Where the white roses bloom—
Here by the western sea,
Our land, in its love for ye,
Is England, is Italy!

From the Boston Transcript.

BROWNING

BY ALICIA VAN BUREN

When Raphael heard the crowd applaud his art,
He smiled up-buoyed with pleasure; yet, I trow,
No laudatory phrase could thrill his heart
Like one short word from Angelo.

So Verdi, when the plaudits wax most loud,
Forgets the cheering and the wreaths that fall,
And looks where sits, amid the noisy crowd,
"Rossini patient in his stall."

And Browning—let the world give praise or blame!
Two voices he could hear, and ever heard:
The voice of Landor, trumpeting his fame,
And hers, "half-angel and half-bird."

*From the Boston Browning Society 1909-1910, p. 20;
published with permission of the Society.*

ROBERT BROWNING

'NOTHING BUT A POET'

BY W. C. GANNETT

'He sat and talked of his own early life and aspirations; how he marvelled, as he looked back, at the audacious obstinacy which had made him, when a youth, determine to be a poet and nothing but a poet.'—*Edmund Gosse on Robert Browning*.

'Nothing but a poet!' So he said, and wondered

At the sole persistence of his years.

Laughing world, you'll know it, now that,
 silence-sundered,

He is in the welcome of his peers.

What said Milton to him, what said Keats
 and Shakespeare?

O, to see the smile on Dante's face!

Catch the great Greek *xatpe*, hear the 'bronze throat'
 hail him,

'Browning's come among us,—give him place!'

'Nothing but a poet,' singing songs of soul-growth,

Splendor in the pain-throb, rise in fall,

'Saul the failure' in us re-creating kingly,—

Songs one surge of morning! 'That was all!'

Browning Commemoration, 1890.

TO ROBERT BROWNING

BY MRS. E. DICKINSON WEST

True-hearted Seer, whose keen and steady eye

Keeping a view-point on an eminence

That reacheth Aither, o'er the world of sense,

Doth, as from prophet's watch-tower, thence descry

Proportions of the things of earth and sky,—

Tell us thy vision when our sight is bound

Where little swellings of the lower ground

Seem our life's only truths because they lie

Betwixt the soul and things whereof it saith

"This I believe" (which meaneth "this I let

Please vacant fancy in one day in seven.")—

—Strengthen thy brethren by thy strength of faith

And teach our human love in trust to set

Its continuity 'twixt Earth and Heaven.

HOMAGE TO

ROBERT BROWNING

BY WILLIAM SHARP

'One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would
triumph:
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.'

*(Died at Palazzo Rezzonico, Venice, 12th December.
Interred in Westminster Abbey, 31st December.)*

So, it is well: what need is there to mourn?
What of the darkness was there, of the dread,
Of all the pity of old age forlorn
When the swift mind and hand are though as dead?
Nothing: the change was his that comes to days
When, after long, rich, restful afternoons,
A sudden flush of glory fills the skies:
Thereafter is the peace of dream-fraught moons,
And then, oh! then for sure, in the eastern ways
At morn, once more Life's golden floods arise.

Ay, it is well: what better fate were his?
Why wish for him the twilight-greyness drear?
He hath not known the bitter thing it is
To halt, and doubt, grope blindly, tremble, fear:
The reverend snows above his forehead brought
No ominous hints of that which might not be,
No chill suggestion of the ephemeral soul:
Unto the very end 'twas his to see
Failure no drear climacteric, but wrought
To nobler issues, a victorious goal.

There where the long lagoons by day and night
Feel the swift journeying tides, in ebb and flow,
Move inward from the deep with sound and light
And splendour of the seas, or outward go
Resurgent from the city that doth rest
Upon the flood even as a swan asleep,
Or as a lily 'mid encircling streams,
Or as a flower a dusky maid doth keep,
An orient maid, upon her love-warm breast,
Thrilled with its inspiration through her dreams:—

There, in the city that he loved so well,
And with the sea-sound in his ears, the sound

Of healing waters in their miracle
Of changeless and regenerative round,
The strange and solemn silence that is death
Came o'er him. 'Mid the loved ones near
The deep suspense of the last torturing hope
Hung like a wounded bird, ere swift and sheer
It fall with the last frail exhausted breath
And feeble fluttering wings that cannot ope.

There death was his: within his golden prime,
Painless, serene, unvanquished, undismayed,
He fronted the dark lapse of mortal time
With eyes alit, through all the gathering shade,
With the strange light that clothes immortal things—
Beauty, and Truth, Faith, Hope, and Joy, and Peace,
The garnered harvest of our human years,
Fair dreams and hopes that triumphed o'er surcease.
The immaculate sweetness of all bygone Springs,
The rainbow-glory of transfigured tears.

Over him went the Powers, the Dreams, the Graces,
The invisible Dominations that we know
Despite the mystic veil that hides their faces,
The immortal faces that divinely glow:
Fair Hope was there to take him by the hand;
White Aspirations smiled about his bed;
Desires and Dreams moved gently by his side;
Beauty stooped low, and shone upon the dead;
Joy spake not, for, from out the Deathless land,
She led God's loveliest gift, his long-lost Bride.

Oh, what a trivial mockery then was this,
The change we so involve with alien terror:
How lorn in light of that supernal bliss
The ruinous wrecking folly of our error!
Sweet beyond words the meeting that was there,
Sweet beyond words the deep-set yearning gaze,
Sweet, sweet the voice that long had silent been!
Ah, how his soul, beleaguered by no maze,
No glooms of Death, i' that Paradisal air
Knew all was well, since She was there, his Queen.

They are not gone, those Dreams, Fair Hopes, and Graces,
Those Powers and Dominations and Desires,
They are not passed, though veiled the immortal faces,

HOMAGE TO

Though dimmed meanwhile their eyes' wild starry fires.
Meanwhile, it may be, on wan wings and slender,
Invisible to mortal gaze, they gleam
In solemn, sad, processional array
There where the sunshafts through stained windows
stream,
And flood the gloomful majesty with splendour,
And charm the aisles from out their brooding grey.

They are not gone: nor shall they ever vanish,
Those precious ministers of him, our Poet:
What madness would it be for one to banish,
To barter his inheritance, forego it,
For some phantasmal gift, some transient boon!
Thus would it be with us were we to turn
Indifferently aside, when *they* draw nigh,
To look with callous gaze, nor once discern
How swift they come and go, how all too soon
They evade for ever the unheeding eye.

They are not gone: for wheresoe'er there liveth
One hope his song inspired—whom *they* inspired—
Yea, wheresoever in one heart there breatheth
An aspiration by his ardour fired:
Where'er through him are souls made serfs to Beauty,
Where'er through him hearts stir with lofty aim,
Where'er through him men thrill with high endeavour,
There shall these ministers breathe low his name,
Linked to ideals of Love and Truth and Duty,
And all high things of mind and soul, for ever.

No carven stone, no monumental fane,
Can equal this: that he hath builded deep
A cenotaph beyond the assoiling reign
Of Her whose eyes are dusk with Night and Sleep,
Queenly Oblivion: no Pyramid,
No vast, gigantic Tomb, no Sepulchre
Made awful with imag'ries of doom,
Evade her hand who one day shall inter
Man's proudest monuments, as she hath hid
The immemorial past within her womb.

For he hath built his lasting monument
Within the hearts and in the minds of men:
The Powers of Life around its base have bent

ROBERT BROWNING

The Stream of Memory: our furthest ken
Beholds no reach, no limit to its rise:
It hath foundations sure; it shall not pass;
The ruin of Time upon it none shall see,
Till the last wind shall wither the last grass,
Nay, while man's Hopes, Fears, Dreams, and Agonies
Uplift his soul to Immortality.

*From The Art Review, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 33-34-35-36;
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ROBERT BROWNING

(December 12th, 1889)

BY GEORGE O'BYRNE

To the princely son of Shakespeare, of fair Lyceum
renown,
Whose fealty to the Drama hath won the Thespian
crown,
Inscribed is my brief Epicede on one, whose transit hence
Hath struck the soul with sorrow, and 'waked sympathy
intense.
For, well 'tis known, his vision, by the process of the
Stage,
Is broadened, and his heart laments the lost bard of the
Age;
And with graciousness will listen to the elegy I quire,
Albeit sparse in genius, and tenderness, and fire.

I who erewhile sang of Byron, and of Burns, and of
Kirke White.
In the worn year's dusky waning mourn another bard
of light,
Lying cold, and mute, and dreamless, set by the Hours
free,
In a palace of the "Bride," and "glorious City in the
Sea."

Ah! the bards, where'er their cradle, by prior right belong
To the rich haunts of the Muses in the sunny lands of
song,
That sparkle from the Apennines to past the Ægean Sea,

HOMAGE TO

Shrine the glories of Parnassus and the fames of Thessaly.

Where Art still claims her temples, though old worshippers are flown,

And to the wistful pilgrim Freedom crieth from the stone:
Where gorgeous, silent sculptures speak an empire passed away;

And flash the gondolas along the tradeless, purple bay,
He sleeps in rigid calmness, the white-haired minstrel prince,

Who won a world's idolatry—I reck not how long since.
Though her "Lion's Mouth" is sealéd and her Doges rule no more,

In Desolation beautiful she touches the heart's core;
For her genii wrought their marvels in the spell of old Argives,

Ere modern atom-counters span mere chrematistic lives:
And her trophies are not lessened because to-day there sleeps

The grand bard, sumptuous Albion, with fallen Venice,
weeps.

While Science slays her thousands, battling in the van
of Truth;

And "Excelsior"—streamer waving, falls her Alp-aspiring youth;

While the weary world, half-hopeless, searches for each
dim abyss

To grasp a "golden compass," or hail new star of bliss:
When empirics and their myrmidons, with dynasties conspire

To burn the prophet's life-scroll, and quench the Muse's lyre,

We shall miss his notes of beauty, of strong solace, and
high hope,—

That message from the gods to us, *without an envelope!*—

We shall miss his velvet finger on the pulse of hot emprise,
We shall miss his soothing anodynes in labour's agonies.

Who hence shall harp his music? shall weave fit anadem
To crown the scholars' temples, or intone their requiem?
For Bryant and sweet Longfellow sleep 'neath Columbia's
"Stars,"

Where the palsied hand of Whittier his vernal "wood-
notes" mars;

ROBERT BROWNING

And Hugo (though I loved him not) has found his
monument,
And 'Martin' of Philosophy, the weirdly sapient;
And good Eliza Cook warms not the breast with noble
thought;
While Tennyson's most dulcet lute the "rift within"
hath caught.
In regal halls, Roumania's Queen alone thrills Sappho's
lyre!—
What monarch stoops to acolyte the proscribed poets'
choir?
While Altar, Senate, Throne, and Camp deride each
other's voice
How may the Muses flourish, how can the Arts rejoice?

Who now shall urge explorer lone through sombre forests
proud,
O'er Arctic snows, and towering peaks that pinnacle the
cloud?
And kindle pean for serried hosts, that, marching forth
in pain,
With hasty 'Pasch,' and bleeding feet, have reached the
Red Tide's plain?
And then, 'midst frenzied billows, shall point to safe
rock higher,
And proudly sound joy's timbrel across the 'Sea of Fire?'
And harking back to Miriam, my mind greets Browning's
bride,
The fair lip whisp'ring *'God is rest,' in long years by
his side.
The minstrel learned it was 'not good' for man alone
to dwell;—
That 'the Voice which breathed o'er Eden' a changeless
truth doth tell.
With all the Muses' dowry, and the 'permit' of each
Grace,
The nuptials of a poet and poetess found place.
A tear for her, reposing 'midst Italia's deathless bowers
Of consecrated myrtle, in the "City of All Flowers!"

'Twere meet, methinks, that minstrel souls (born in the
merry May)
Should wing their flight when Christmas floods the
world with hollied ray:
If lose we *must* their halo, let us yield it at the birth

HOMAGE TO

Of Light supreme, whose heaven is then reflected over
earth.
For we joy to paint them thridding a paradise of peace
While belfry chimes tell mortals of divinest harmonies,
And the chastened snow, like mercy, dropping gently on
their tombs,
Transforms the cypress o'er them to celestial nodding
plumes;
When the 'Truce of God' is signalled from remotest
clime to clime
By the watchers of Eternity to sentinels of Time:
When, gathering by the ingle, in the effluence of love,
We anticipate re-union with remembered souls above,
Rehearsing golden lessons of immortal Sage and Child,
Made dearer by the Poet who late amidst us smiled.

* Elizabeth—"God is rest."

Nottingham, December, 1889.

TO THE POET

(*A Sonnet*)

BY RIICHIOR HOASHI

Take me, O Poet, to thy world of dream,
Where countless cherubs on their pinions white
Wander through stainless Virtue's silver light,
And bask in heavenly Love's auroral gleam;
Or where thou treadest the star-sprinkled stream
Of Galaxy, upon whose banks the bright
Amaranths blow! Soothed by the beauteous sight
And balmy air, our life's a dream, a dream
Is life. Strike up thy lyre, O Seer, O Bard,
Awake thy fancy's sweetest tune, for none
But thine may soothe my sorrow-laden heart!
Construct for me a rainbow bridge to span
The highest heaven, whence Truth's live fire shall dart
Into my frozen soul and make me man!

ROBERT BROWNING

THY CROWN'S A STAR

Dedicated to Robert Browning

BY ANNIS J. SCOTT

The pathway narrows as we wander down,
And leave the hillside, rugged, rough, and brown.
We look toward sunlit meadows, bright, and gay,
With flowers that catch the sunshine of the day.

Still farther on, a river runs so still,
We hear not, see not; yet we know its will
Is to be silent, till we reach its brink,
And into its soft shadows, gently sink.

Upon its banks, tall grass and rushes grow,
That sway, and nod, as gentle zephyrs blow.
Refreshed, we rise: flows on the river, slow,
Between its banks, where reeds, and rushes grow.

This valley green, with flowers so gay bedecked,
This river, cool, its current still unchecked,
Could never to the multitude be blest,
Did not yon mountains give the vale, their best.

From these great towers, glowing with their light,
Come streams of strength, and brilliancy, and might.
The valley, rich with their great wealth, was made,
And hills rejoiced to rest within their shade.

O mountain-peaks, that, reaching, pierce the dome;
O meadows, sweet, that blossom where we roam;
O river, flowing, ever, 'tween thy banks,
Let us, whose footsteps wander, give thee thanks.

We see beyond the river's farther side,
A Mountain, proud, where gods of thought abide:
With crown of silver, shining like a star,
Distinct, alone, 'mong many stars that are.

We heed not that the pathway narrows; now
We catch the glory shining from thy brow.
O Friend, and Seer, thou'st filled the meadow sweet,
With flowers fair, to soothe the wanderer's feet!

Thy feet have trod the narrow, narrow way;
Thy hills are left; and at the close of day,
Thou slipped into the stream; it goes its way,
But thou arose. Thy crown's a star, today.

HOMAGE TO

ASPIRATION*

Dedicated to Robert Browning

BY ALICE HARRIMAN

Oh, gallant little English lad,
You never knew the time,
When you did not intend to be
Most eminent in rhyme.

Immortal company you chose!
Endymion was your friend;
And Shelley's sky-lark, every morn,
Was wont your heart to rend.

The poets of the English Lakes
Enticed, with beckoning hand,
To climb to hills whereon they stood;
To view the promised land,—

Range after range—Parnassian peaks,
Of purest poetry.
“I'll scale them all!” your spirit cried;
“‘Sky-treader’ would *I* be!”

But somehow, on your natal day,
I see you, wistful, sad.
If it could be, oh, would you be,
Again a little lad?

*Browning's sister said he once told her he never knew the time when he did not aspire to be eminent in rhyme.
—Gosse.

THE MASTER SINGER

BY ELIZABETH CLENDENNING RING

“Master!” the Singing Men acclaim thee,—pale
Before thy altar fires,
Like winds before the rain’s grey flail,
To muted lyres,
Their voices rise and fall.

Thou moving down the starry ways,
With tread Olympian,
Whisp’ring some bold, symphonic phrase,
In thy perfected song,
To shades Elysian,
Dost smiling hear their hymns of praise.

Flute-clear behind the old grey wall,
Still echoes Pippa’s dreamlit call,
And oft when down a dust-bleak street,
Her laughing song goes lilting, sweet,
Men stop to ponder the strange dream,
Awakened by her song serene.

Still Andrea mourns his tarnished dreams,
The dying Bishop plots and schemes,
To lie in blissful ecstasy,
’Neath matchless lapis lazuli.
Still, down a haunted Roman Street,
Pompilia hastes with bleeding feet,
Swift to her doom.

Sordello, Ezra, grave physicians,
Blougram and Sludge, inspired musicians,
Women divine and maids whose tresses
Lure men to death with mad caresses,
Each in his turn, upon thy stage,
Work out thy creed Immortal Sage.

That Love exalted, all persistent,
Shall reign, though Hate may mock and scheme,
That Righteousness, with note insistent,
Shall quench Wrong’s brutal, sordid theme.
That Truth above the market place,
Where Falsehood flaunts her shameless grace,
Shall lift the glory of her face.

HOMAGE TO

ART AND POPULARITY

To R. Browning

*("No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth
new, for he saith the old is better").*

BY E. D. W. (ELIZABETH D. WEST DOWDEN)

Haply thy life were harmed if earth her fame
Had proffered ere years proved thou didst not need
Drink of applause Arts' daily force to feed;
Ere the *ποιητης* —God,—deep source whence came
Thy poet's impulse, bade thee first to claim
Reward like to His own—true artists' meed
Of joy that flows in essence of the deed,
Unreached by accident of laud or blame.

But now, since thou through long uncrowned days
Didst draw soul's strength from draughts of that old wine
Of gladness, which doth evermore sustain
All Nature's working, human or divine:
No fear for thee, lest thou that first good gain
Shouldst quit, to thirst for new wine of men's praise.

1892.

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Page One Hundred Forty-six*

“Or at times a modern volume,—Wordsworth’s solemn-
thoughted idyl,
Howitt’s ballad-verse, or Tennyson’s enchanted reverie,—
Or from Browning some ‘Pomegranate’, which, if cut
deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined
humanity.”

“Lady Geraldine’s Courtship.”

ELIZABETH BARRETT.

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